The Art of the Essayist

Edited by C. H. LOCKITT



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THE ART OF THE ESSAYIST

EDITED BY

C. H. LOCKITT

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INTRODUCTION

How, precisely, shall we define an essay? The answer is not an easy one, for the concept depends largely on the literary standards of any age in which a particular essayist happens to be born. Our earliest definition of the function of the essay comes from our earliest essayist, Lord Bacon, who tells us that "the word is late but the thing is ancient," a statement upon which we need not enlarge here since it is fully discussed in the essay on the *Art of the Essayist* from the pen of A. C. Benson. Lord Bacon amplified his statement by adding that "Seneca's epistles are but essays—that is, dispersed meditations": in other words, a vehicle for the expression of a man's thoughts, which he conceived as entering into the essay as disconnectedly as the passengers may enter a train or omnibus. Viewed in this light, the "thing" is even more ancient than Seneca; for the thoughts of Jesus, son of Sirach, which, under the title of Ecclesiasticus, are included in the books of the Bible in that part known as the Apocrypha, quite clearly come under the heading of "dispersed meditations." Indeed, in some respects, Jesus Ben-Sirach is more modern than Bacon or Cowley, in that, while they, true sons of the Revival of Learning, drew their arguments from the lessons of history, he relied on those of life, as he saw it. Their aims, however, are identical; conscious of superior attainments and wisdom, they felt the obligation to place their philosophy of life at the disposal of others. The highly personal essays of to-day may be more readable but are not inspired by the high moral purpose which inspired Bacon

and his contemporaries. Bacon was a philosopher and his essays are packed with thought and learning: Dr. Johnson in his *Life of Cowley* bore tribute to Cowley's smooth and placid style, which is perhaps the natural consequence of his poetic temperament.

In the year 1616, when Bacon was in his prime and Cowley not yet born, London was excited by a *cause célèbre*, the trial of the King's favourite, Carr, Earl of Somerset, and his Countess for the murder of a certain Sir Thomas Overbury by poisoning him while he was a prisoner in the Tower of London. This Overbury was a scholar and writer who combined his literary pursuits with the more profitable occupation of being a court sycophant, and among his writings was a slim volume which he entitled simply *Characters*. It contained what had a certain vogue among his contemporaries, brief sketches of character and manners, of which the *Character of a Milkmaid* has received the applause of posterity. In the following reign John Earle, Bishop of Salisbury, published a book with the somewhat cumbrous title of *Microcosmography, or A Piece of the World Discovered in Essays and Characters*, on the lines of Overbury's work. It is interesting to note the word "essays" in Earle's alternative title, because it suggests that, even then, the word was receiving an extension of meaning, destined, in fact, to be still further extended in the reign of Charles II with its application to such a monumental treatise as Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding* and to so elaborate a piece of criticism as Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesie*. Both Overbury and Earle are minor writers, but their importance for us here is that they ploughed a virgin field which, transformed by the genius of Steele and Addison, opened up a new and fruitful field to the essay-writer. The result can be seen in Steele's *Trumpet Club* and still better in the later *Spectator Club*.

in which the aim is no longer to elevate or to philosophize but to interest and amuse the readers of the *Tatler* or the *Spectator*. Steele and Addison are the pioneers of the "periodical essay," written on homely themes and topics of the day, for the entertainment of the subscribers to a newspaper or journal, and, so, couched —and this is the peculiar contribution of the genius of Addison—in a familiar and readable style. Steele and Addison were literary journalists, the forerunners of innumerable literary journalists, some of whom are represented in this volume, who, in editorials, articles and reviews have, for the last century and a half, mirrored the social and political thought of their time and bequeathed to the historian an "abstract and brief chronicle" of the spirit of the age in which they wrote.

Addison and Steele had their immediate successors, men who contributed to periodicals launched either by themselves or by the booksellers, to whose initiative literature in the eighteenth century owed much. Many of them were men of considerable ability, but the two, whose work in this field has achieved a permanent position in our literature, are Samuel Johnson and the Irishman, Oliver Goldsmith. Dr. Johnson owed his introduction to the world of letters to Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine*, but his reputation depends more on his *Dictionary* and his *Lives of the Poets*—not to mention Boswell's famous biography of him—than it does on the essays which he contributed to the *Idler* and the *Rambler Magazines*: though Goldsmith too has other titles to fame, his essays are classic examples of the late eighteenth-century essay. At this point we may well pause to consider what the word "essay" implied to these men and their contemporaries, since we have available Dr. Johnson's own definition as contained in the famous *Dictionary*. It was published in 1755 by a group

of booksellers and explains the word as "a loose sally of the mind: an irregular, undigested piece: not a regular and orderly composition." The picturesque phrase, "a loose sally of the mind" with its suggestive parallel to the disorderly outrush of the besieged from a beleagured fortress, indicates how far the essay has developed from the sober "meditations" of Bacon's conception: it conjures up a picture of the essay as an impetuous outpouring of ideas, without form or arrangement, but with all the freshness of an eager mind. It is an ideal conception, not always fulfilled in practice because ideals are not always compatible with the necessities of pot-boiling: and essays turned out to order tend to fall into regular shape, as in any other case of mass production.

These *Tatlers* and *Spectators* and *Idlers* had a short life: normally they died when the writer who gave them distinction ceased to contribute. The opening years of the nineteenth century, however, witnessed the rise of a more permanent series of journals with the coming into existence of the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews* and of *Blackwood's* and the *London Magazines*. The Reviews confined themselves to the discussion of works of literature, science and art, or to reflections on public events or national policy: the Magazines, on the other hand, admitted original compositions or stories on any topic which the editor judged suitable and interesting to his readers. The range of matters which the essay covered increased enormously. For our purpose we may note that Hazlitt's work appeared in both the *Edinburgh* and, to some extent, the *London*, a magazine which conferred an inestimable gift on the English-speaking world by printing Lamb's *Essays of Elia*. Lamb and Hazlitt effected a revolution in essay-writing as remarkable as that effected by Addison and Steele a century earlier. Hazlitt was a man of independent mind and no

imitator. He had all the gusto that a "loose sally of the mind" demanded, but combined with it a love for orderly and symmetrical arrangement; his titles, for example, are frequently apt to run in contrasted pairs, such as *On Vulgarity and Affectation*, or *On Great and Little Things*, or *On Paradox and Common-place*—to quote at random from the index to a volume of his *Table-Talk*. Lamb possessed the priceless gift of being able to laugh at himself and through himself at other men, a Cockney type of humour. He had no desire to lay down a philosophy of life or to preach it: it has been said of him that he saw himself as a man of ordinary calibre, as are other men, and wrote of humanity at large on the assumption that the incidents of his own life were the sort of incidents liable to befall everybody, colouring them—to the reader's enjoyment—with his own Puckish humour. This is the beginning of what we may call the "personal" essay, and since Lamb's time it has been generally accepted that the most vital essays have this personal touch. This does not mean that they are couched in the first person; all that it involves is that the essay should so reflect the writer's temperament and outlook that the reader can form a mental picture of the man he is. Lamb is said to have detested the description by which he is often known, "the gentle Elia," but generations of readers have approved the aptness of the phrase: or, to take another example from this volume, can the reader of *In Crimson Silk* fail to detect the breezy heartiness of Mr. Priestley as we have heard it in many a broadcast talk? The "personal essay," then, belongs, like the lyric, to the literature of self-expression, and the name applies to the majority of the essays of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many of them, it is true, appeared in periodicals, for, as the years passed, the essay gravitated from the Quarterlies to the Month-

lies and thence to the Weeklies and even to the Dailies. This does not, however, make them "periodical" essays, as the term is generally used, for the true periodical essay reveals the social and political outlook of its time in a way that the personal essay does not: but the dividing-line is sometimes very thin.

How do we now define the essay? The greatest dictionary of our time, the *Oxford (New) English Dictionary*, defines an essay as "a composition of moderate length on a particular subject or branch of a subject; *originally* (the italics are mine) implying want of finish but *now* said of a composition more or less elaborate of style though limited in range." We have travelled a long way from Johnson's "loose sally of the mind"; his undigested meal has become a light digestible repast and his disorderly composition a carefully constructed and elaborately designed work of art. Granted that the essayist has something to say that is worth saying, the definition requires that he should not attempt to deal exhaustively with his subject: his essay must be "limited in range": in the selection of the aspect of the matter that appeals to him, he finds his opportunity for a measure of that self-revelation that is the hall-mark of the personal essay. Again, the definition requires that the essay should be of moderate length: R. L. Stevenson, one of our finest essayists and the man who first gave to the essay the elaboration of style which has taken the place of eighteenth-century "want of finish," once declared that the only art needed of the writer was to know how to omit. This is not so easy as it sounds: it was a Roman poet, Horace, who laid down the dictum that the more one strove to be brief, the more difficult it was to make one's meaning clear. Our twentieth-century essayists have been, on the whole, remarkably successful in achieving both balance and restraint, as several of

the later essays in this book will show; one of them, however, Belloc's *On a Variety of Things* provides an example of a different method altogether, one in which the writer allows his mind to jump, grasshopper-fashion, from thought to thought: which only shows how difficult it is to define so eminently personal a thing as the essay. One final word on the two essays from *The Times*. Essays are plentiful to-day but it is doubtful if any of them gives more pleasure to more people than the—quite anonymous—Fourth Leader in that paper; seizing avidly on the most unexpected item of the current news, sometimes gay, sometimes grave, it may be as erudite and philosophical as Bacon, or as personal as Lamb, and day after day sums up in itself all those qualities of learning, tenderness and humour which the English essay has attracted to itself in the course of three and a half centuries.

FALSE FRIENDS AND TRUE

Every friend saith "I am his friend"; but there is a friend, which is only a friend in name. Is it not a grief even unto death, when a companion and friend is turned to an enemy? O wicked imagination, wherefore wast thou created—to fill the face of the earth with deceit? Base is the friend who hath regard to one's table, but in time of affliction standeth aloof. A good friend contendeth with one's enemy, and taketh hold of the shield against the adversary.

Every counsellor extolleth his own counsel, but there is that counselleth a way to suit himself. Let thy soul beware of such a counsellor and inform thyself of him beforehand, for he himself will also take thought why matters should fall out as he wisheth, and will say unto thee, "Thy way is good" and then stand off to watch thy misfortune. Take not counsel with one that looketh askance at thee; and hide thy counsel from such as are jealous of thee. Consult not with a woman touching her of whom she is jealous, neither with a coward about war; nor with a merchant about exchange; nor with a buyer about selling; nor with a niggard about benevolence; nor with an unmerciful man about kindliness; nor with a sluggard about any kind of work; nor with the yearly hireling concerning seed time; nor with an idle servant about much business: give not heed to these in any matter of counsel, but rather be continually with a godly man, whom thou shalt have known to be a keeper of the commandments, whose heart is at one with thine own and who, if thou stumble, will be grieved for thee.

And let the counsel of thine own heart stand, for there is none more faithful unto thee than it.

Ecclesiasticus, or the wisdom of Jesus, son of Sirach, chapter 37.

OF FRIENDSHIP

It had been hard for him that spake it to have put more truth and untruth together in a few words, than in that speech, *Whosoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or a god.* For it is most true that a natural and secret hatred and aversation towards society, in any man, hath somewhat of the savage beast; but it is most untrue that it should have any character at all of the divine nature; except it proceed, not out of a pleasure in solitude, but out of a love and desire to sequester a man's self for a higher conversation: such as is found to have been falsely and feignedly in some of the heathen; as Epimenides the Candian, Numa the Roman, Empedocles the Sicilian, and Apollonius of Tyana; and truly and really in divers of the ancient hermits and holy fathers of the church. But little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth. For a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love. The Latin adage meeteth with it a little, *Magna civitas, magna solitudo*; because in a great town friends are scattered; so that there is not that fellowship, for the most part, which is in less neighbourhoods. But we may go further and affirm most truly, that it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness; and even in this sense also of solitude, whosoever in the frame of his nature and affections is unfit for friendship, he taketh it of the beast, and not from humanity.

A principal fruit of friendship is the ease and dis-

charge of the fulness and swellings of the heart, which passions of all kinds do cause and induce. We know diseases of stoppings and suffocations are the most dangerous in the body; and it is not much otherwise in the mind: you may take sarza to open the liver, steel to open the spleen, flowers of sulphur for the lungs, castoreum for the brain; but no receipt openeth the heart, but a true friend, to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it, in a kind of civil shrift or confession.

It is a strange thing to observe how high a rate great kings and monarchs do set upon this fruit of friendship whereof we speak: so great, as they purchase it many times at the hazard of their own safety and greatness. For princes, in regard of the distance of their fortune from that of their subjects and servants, cannot gather this fruit, except (to make themselves capable thereof) they raise some persons to be as it were companions and almost equals to themselves, which many times sorteth to inconvenience. The modern languages give unto such person the name of *favourites*, or *privadoes*; as if it were matter of grace, or conversation. But the Roman name attaineth the true use and cause thereof, naming them *participes curarum;* for it is that which tieth the knot. And we see plainly that this hath been done, not by weak and passionate princes only, but by the wisest and most politic that ever reigned; who have oftentimes joined to themselves some of their servants, whom both themselves have called *friends*, and allowed others likewise to call them in the same manner, using the word which is received between private men.

L. Sylla, when he commanded Rome, raised Pompey (after surnamed the Great) to that height, that Pompey vaunted himself for Sylla's overmatch. For when he

had carried the consulship for a friend of his, against the pursuit of Sylla, and that Sylla did a little resent thereat, and began to speak great, Pompey turned upon him again, and in effect bade him be quiet; *for that more men adored the sun rising than the sun setting.* With Julius Cæsar, Decimus Brutus had obtained that interest, as he set him down in his testament for heir in remainder after his nephew. And this was the man that had power with him to draw him forth to his death. For when Cæsar would have discharged the senate, in regard of some ill presages, and specially a dream of Calpurnia, this man lifted him gently by the arm out of his chair, telling him he hoped he would not dismiss the senate till his wife had dreamt a better dream. And it seemeth his favour was so great, as Antonius, in a letter which is recited *verbatim* in one of Cicero's *Philippics*, calleth him *venefica*, "witch"; as if he had enchanted Cæsar. Augustus raised Agrippa (though of mean birth) to that height, as, when he consulted with Mæcenas about the marriage of his daughter Julia, Mæcenas took the liberty to tell him, *that he must either marry his daughter to Agrippa, or take away his life; there was no third way, he had made him so great.* With Tiberius Cæsar, Sejanus had ascended to that height, as they two were termed and reckoned as a pair of friends. Tiberius in a letter to him saith, *Hæc pro amicitiâ nostrâ non occultavi*; and the whole senate dedicated an altar to Friendship, as to a goddess, in respect of the great dearness of friendship between them two. The like or more was between Septimius Severus and Plautianus. For he forced his eldest son to marry the daughter of Plautianus; and would often maintain Plautianus in doing affronts to his son; and did write also in a letter to the senate by these words: *I love the man so well, as I wish he may overlive me.* Now if these princes had been as a Trajan, or

a Marcus Aurelius, a man might have thought that this had proceeded of an abundant goodness of nature; but being men so wise, for such strength and severity of mind, and so extreme lovers of themselves, as all these were, it proveth most plainly that they found their own felicity (though as great as ever happened to mortal men) but as an half piece, except they mought have a friend to make it entire: and yet, which is more, they were princes that had wives, sons, nephews; and yet all these could not supply the comfort of friendship.

It is not to be forgotten, what Commineus observeth of his first master, Duke Charles the Hardy; namely, that he would communicate his secrets with none; and least of all, those secrets which troubled him most. Whereupon he goeth on and saith, that towards his latter time *that closeness did impair and a little perish his understanding*. Surely Commineus mought have made the same judgment also, if it had pleased him, of his second master, Lewis the Eleventh, whose closeness was indeed his tormentor. The parable of Pythagoras is dark, but true; *Cor ne edito*, "Eat not the heart." Certainly, if a man would give it a hard phrase, those that want friends to open themselves unto are cannibals of their own hearts. But one thing is most admirable (wherewith I will conclude this first fruit of friendship), which is, that this communicating of a man's self to his friend works two contrary effects; for it redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in halfs. For there is no man that imparteth his joys to his friend, but he joyeth the more; and no man that imparteth his griefs to his friend, but he grieveth the less. So that it is in truth of operation upon a man's mind, of like virtue as the alchymists use to attribute to their stone for man's body; that it worketh all contrary effects, but still to the good and benefit of nature. But yet, without praying in aid of alchymists,

there is a manifest image of this in the ordinary course of nature. For in bodies, union strengtheneth and cherisheth any natural action; and, on the other side, weakeneth and dulleth any violent impression: and even so is it of minds.

The second fruit of friendship is healthful and sovereign for the understanding, as the first is for the affections. For friendship maketh indeed a fair day in the affections, from storm and tempests; but it maketh daylight in the understanding, out of darkness and confusion of thoughts. Neither is this to be understood only of faithful counsel, which a man receiveth from his friend; but before you come to that, certain it is that whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up, in the communicating and discoursing with another: he tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly; he seeth how they look when they are turned into words; finally, he waxeth wiser than himself; and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation. It was well said by Themistocles to the king of Persia, *that speech was like cloth of Arras, opened and put abroad; whereby the imagery doth appear in figure; whereas in thoughts they lie but as in packs.* Neither is this second fruit of friendship, in opening the understanding, restrained only to such friends as are able to give a man counsel: (they indeed are best); but even without that, a man learneth of himself, and bringeth his own thoughts to light, and whetteth his wits as against a stone, which itself cuts not. In a word, a man were better relate himself to a statua or picture, than to suffer his thoughts to pass in smother.

Add now, to make this second fruit of friendship complete, that other point, which lieth more open, and

falleth within vulgar observation; which is faithful counsel from a friend. Heraclitus saith well in one of his enigmas, *Dry light is ever the best.* And certain it is that the light that a man receiveth by counsel from another is drier and purer than that which cometh from his own understanding and judgment; which is ever infused and drenched in his affections and customs. So as there is as much difference between the counsel that a friend giveth, and that a man giveth himself, as there is between the counsel of a friend and of a flatterer. For there is no such flatterer as is a man's self; and there is no such remedy against flattery of a man's self as the liberty of a friend. Counsel is of two sorts; the one concerning manners, the other concerning business. For the first; the best preservative to keep the mind in health is the faithful admonition of a friend. The calling of a man's self to a strict account is a medicine, sometime, too piercing and corrosive. Reading good books of morality is a little flat and dead. Observing our faults in others is sometimes unproper for our case. But the best receipt (best, I say, to work, and best to take) is the admonition of a friend. It is a strange thing to behold what gross errors and extreme absurdities many (especially of the greater sort) do commit, for want of a friend to tell them of them, to the great damage both of their fame and fortune. For, as St. James saith, they are as men, *that look sometimes into a glass, and presently forget their own shape and favour.* As for business, a man may think, if he will, that two eyes see no more than one; or that a gamester seeth always more than a looker-on; or that a man in anger is as wise as he that hath said over the four and twenty years; or that a musket may be shot off as well upon the arm as upon a rest; and such other fond and high imaginations, to think himself all in all. But when all is done, the help

of good counsel is that which setteth business straight. And if any man think that he will take counsel, but it shall be by pieces; asking counsel in one business of one man, and in another business of another man; it is well (that is to say, better perhaps than if he asked none at all); but he runneth two dangers. One, that he shall not be faithfully counselled; for it is a rare thing, except it be from a perfect and entire friend, to have counsel given, but such as shall be bowed and crooked to some ends which he hath that giveth it. The other, that he shall have counsel given, hurtful and unsafe (though with good meaning), and mixed partly of mischief and partly of remedy: even as if you would call a physician, that is thought good for the cure of the disease you complain of, but is unacquainted with your body; and therefore may put you in way for a present cure, but overthroweth your health in some other kind; and so cure the disease and kill the patient. But a friend that is wholly acquainted with a man's estate will beware, by furthering any present business, how he dasheth upon other inconvenience. And therefore rest not upon scattered counsels; they will rather distract and mislead than settle and direct.

After these two noble fruits of friendship (peace in the affections, and support of the judgment) followeth the last fruit, which is like the pomegranate, full of many kernels; I mean aid and bearing a part in all actions and occasions. Here the best way to represent to life the manifold use of friendship is to cast and see how many things there are which a man cannot do himself; and then it will appear that it was a sparing speech of the ancients, to say, *that a friend is another himself*: for that a friend is far more than himself. Men have their time, and die many times in desire of some things which they principally take to heart; the bestow-

ing of a child, the finishing of a work, or the like. If a man have a true friend, he may rest almost secure that the care of those things will continue after him. So that a man hath as it were two lives in his desires. A man hath a body, and that body is confined to a place; but where friendship is, all offices of life are as it were granted to him and his deputy. For he may exercise them by his friend. How many things are there which a man cannot, with any face or comeliness, say or do himself! A man can scarce allege his own merits with modesty, much less extol them; a man cannot sometimes brook to supplicate or beg; and a number of the like. But all these things are graceful in a friend's mouth, which are blushing in a man's own. So again, a man's person hath many proper relations which he cannot put off. A man cannot speak to his son but as a father; to his wife but as a husband; to his enemy but upon terms: whereas a friend may speak as the case requires, and not as it sorteth with the person. But to enumerate these things were endless: I have given the rule, where a man cannot fitly play his own part: if he have not a friend, he may quit the stage.

LORD VERULAM—*The Essays of Francis Bacon.*

OF YOUTH AND AGE

A MAN that is young in years may be old in hours, if he have lost no time. But that happeneth rarely. Generally, youth is like the first cogitations, not so wise as the second. For there is a youth in thoughts as well as in ages. And yet the invention of young men is more lively than that of the old; and imaginations stream into their minds better, and, as it were, more divinely. Natures that have much heat, and great and violent desires and perturbations, are not ripe for action till they have passed the meridian of their years: as it was with Julius Cæsar, and Septimius Severus. Of the latter of whom it is said, *Juventutem egit erroribus, imo furoribus, plenam.* And yet he was the ablest emperor, almost, of all the list. But reposed natures may do well in youth. As it is seen in Augustus Cæsar, Cosmus, Duke of Florence, Gaston de Foix, and others. On the other side, heat and vivacity in age is an excellent composition for business. Young men are fitter to invent than to judge; fitter for execution than for counsel; and fitter for new projects than for settled business. For the experience of age, in things that fall within the compass of it, directeth them; but in new things, abuseth them. The errors of young men are the ruin of business; but the errors of aged men amount but to this, that more might have been done, or sooner. Young men, in the conduct and manage of actions, embrace more than they can hold; stir more than they can quiet; fly to the end, without consideration of the means and degrees; pursue some few principles which they have chanced upon absurdly;

care not to innovate, which draws unknown inconveniences; use extreme remedies at first; and, that which doubleth all errors, will not acknowledge or retract them; like an unready horse, that will neither stop nor turn. Men of age object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon, and seldom drive business home to the full period, but content themselves with a mediocrity of success. Certainly, it is good to compound employments of both; for that will be good for the present, because the virtues of either age may correct the defects of both; and good for succession, that young men may be learners, while men in age are actors; and, lastly, good for extern accidents, because authority followeth old men, and favour and popularity youth. But for the moral part, perhaps youth will have the preeminence, as age hath for the politic. A certain rabbin, upon the text, *Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams*, inferreth that young men are admitted nearer to God than old, because vision is a clearer revelation than a dream. And certainly, the more a man drinketh of the world, the more it intoxicateth; and age doth profit rather in the powers of understanding, than in the virtues of the will and affections. There be some have an over-early ripeness in their years, which fadeth betimes. These are, first, such as have brittle wits, the edge whereof is soon turned; such as was Hermogenes the rhetorician, whose books are exceeding subtile, who afterwards waxed stupid. A second sort is of those that have some natural dispositions which have better grace in youth than in age; such as is a fluent and luxuriant speech, which becomes youth well, but not age: so Tully saith of Hortensius, *Idem manebat, neque idem docebat.* The third is of such as take too high a strain at the first, and are magnanimous more than tract of years can uphold.

As was Scipio Africanus, of whom Livy saith in effect, *Ultima primis cedebant.*

LORD VERULAM—*The Essays of Francis Bacon.*

OF SOLITUDE

"*Nunquam minus solus, quam cum solus,*" is now become a very vulgar saying. Every man, and almost every boy, for these seventeen hundred years has had it in his mouth. But it was at first spoken by the excellent Scipio, who was without question a most eloquent and witty person, as well as the most wise, most worthy, most happy, and the greatest of all mankind. His meaning no doubt was this: that he found more satisfaction to his mind, and more improvement of it by solitude than by company; and to show that he spoke not this loosely or out of vanity, after he had made Rome mistress of almost the whole world, he retired himself from it by a voluntary exile, and at a private house in the middle of a wood near Linternum passed the remainder of his glorious life no less gloriously. This house Seneca went to see so long after with great veneration, and, among other things, describes his bath to have been of so mean a structure that now, says he, the basest of the people would despise them, and cry out, "Poor Scipio understood not how to live." What an authority is here for the credit of retreat! and happy had it been for Hannibal if adversity could have taught him as much wisdom as was learnt by Scipio from the highest prosperities. This would be no wonder if it were as truly as it is colourably and wittily said by Monsieur de Montaigne, that ambition itself might teach us to love solitude: there is nothing does so much hate to have companions. It is true, it loves to have its elbows free, it detests to have company on either side, but it delights above all things

in a train behind, ay, and ushers, too, before it. But the greater part of men are so far from the opinion of that noble Roman, that if they chance at any time to be without company they are like a becalmed ship; they never move but by the wind of other men's breath, and have no oars of their own to steer withal. It is very fantastical and contradictory in human nature that men should love themselves above all the rest of the world, and yet never endure to be with themselves. When they are in love with a mistress, all other persons are importunate and burdensome to them. "*Tecum vivere amem, tecum obeam lubens.*" They would live and die with her alone.

Sic ego secretis possum benè vivere silvis
Quà nulla humano sit via trita pede,
Tu mihi curarum requies, tu nocte vel atrâ
Lumen, et in solis tu mihi turba locis.

With thee for ever I in woods could rest,
Where never human foot the ground has pressed
Thou from all shades the darkness canst exclude,
And from a desert banish solitude.

And yet our dear self is so wearisome to us that we can scarcely support its conversation for an hour together. This is such an odd temper of mind as Catullus expresses towards one of his mistresses, whom we may suppose to have been of a very unsociable humour.

Odi et Amo, qua nam id faciam ratione requiris?
Nescio, sed fieri sentio, et excrucior.

I hate, and yet I love thee too;
How can that be? I know not how;
Only that so it is I know,
And feel with torment that 'tis so.

It is a deplorable condition this, and drives a man sometimes to pitiful shifts in seeking how to avoid himself.

The truth of the matter is, that neither he who is a fop in the world is a fit man to be alone, nor he who has set his heart much upon the world, though he has ever so much understanding; so that solitude can be well fitted and set right but upon a very few persons. They must have enough knowledge of the world to see the vanity of it, and enough virtue to despise all vanity; if the mind be possessed with any lust or passions, a man had better be in a fair than in a wood alone. They may, like petty thieves, cheat us perhaps, and pick our pockets in the midst of company, but like robbers, they use to strip and bind, or murder us when they catch us alone. This is but to retreat from men, and fall into the hands of devils. It is like the punishment of parricides among the Romans, to be sewed into a bag with an ape, a dog and a serpent. The first work, therefore, that a man must do to make himself capable of the good of solitude is the very eradication of all lusts, for how is it possible for a man to enjoy himself while his affections are tied to things without himself? In the second place, he must learn the art and get the habit of thinking; for this too, no less than well speaking, depends upon much practice; and cogitation is the thing which distinguishes the solitude of a god from a wild beast. Now because the soul of man is not by its own nature or observation furnished with sufficient materials to work upon; it is necessary for it to have continual resource to learning and books for fresh supplies, so that the solitary life will grow indigent, and be ready to starve without them; but if once we be thoroughly engaged in the love of letters, instead of being wearied with the length of any day, we shall only complain of the shortness of our whole life.

O vita, stulto longa, sapienti brevis!

O life, long to the fool, short to the wise!

The First Minister of State has not so much business in public as a wise man has in private; if the one have little leisure to be alone, the other has less leisure to be in company; the one has but part of the affairs of one nation, the other all the works of God and nature under his consideration. There is no saying shocks me so much as that which I hear very often, "That a man does not know how to pass his time." It would have been but ill spoken by Methuselah in the nine hundred and sixty-ninth year of his life, so far it is from us, who have not time enough to attain to the utmost perfection of any part of any science, to have cause to complain that we are forced to be idle for want of work. But this you will say is work only for the learned, others are not capable either of the employments or the divertisements that arise from letters. I know they are not, and therefore cannot much recommend solitude to a man totally illiterate. But if any man be so unlearned as to want entertainment of the little intervals of accidental solitude, which frequently occur in almost all conditions (except the very meanest of the people, who have business enough in the necessary provisions for life), it is truly a great shame both to his parents and himself; for a very small portion of any ingenious art will stop up all those gaps of our time, either music, or painting, or designing, or chemistry, or history, or gardening, or twenty other things, will do it usefully and pleasantly, and if he happen to set his affections upon poetry (which I do not advise him too immoderately) that will overdo it; no wood will be thick enough to hide him from the importunities of company or business, which would abstract him from his beloved.

—— O quis me gelidis sub montibus Hœmi
Sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbrâ?

I

Hail, old patrician trees, so great and good!
Hail, ye plebeian underwood!
Where the poetic birds rejoice,
And for their quiet nests and plenteous food
Pay with their grateful voice.

II

Hail, the poor Muses' richest manor seat!
Ye country houses and retreat
Which all the happy gods so love,
That for you oft they quit their bright and great
Metropolis above.

III

Here Nature does a house for me erect,
Nature the wisest architect,
Who those fond artists does despise
That can the fair and living trees neglect,
Yet the dead timber prize.

IV

Here let me, careless and unthoughtful lying,
Hear the soft winds, above me flying,
With all their wanton boughs dispute,
And the more tuneful birds to both replying,
Nor be myself too mute.

V

A silver stream shall roll his waters near,
  Gilt with the sunbeams here and there,
  On whose enamelled bank I'll walk,
And see how prettily they smile, and hear
  How prettily they talk.

VI

Ah wretched, and too solitary he
  Who loves not his own company!
  He'll feel the weight of't many a day,
Unless he call in sin or vanity
  To help to bear't away.

VII

Oh solitude, first state of human-kind:
  Which blest remained till man did find
  Even his own helper's company.
As soon as two, alas, together joined,
  The serpent made up three.

VIII

Though God himself, through countless ages, thee
  His sole companion chose to be,
  Thee, sacred Solitude alone;
Before the branchy head of number's Tree
  Sprang from the trunk of One.

IX

Thou (though men think thine an unactive part)
  Dost break and tame th' unruly heart,

Which else would know no settled pace,
Making it move, well managed by thy art,
With swiftness and with grace.

X

Thou the faint beams of Reason's scattered light
Dost like a burning-glass unite;
Dost multiply the feeble heat,
And fortify the strength, till thou dost bright
And noble fires beget.

XI

Whilst this hard truth I teach, methinks, I see
The monster London laugh at me;
I should at thee too, foolish city,
If it were fit to laugh at misery.
But thy estate, I pity.

XII

Let but thy wicked men from out thee go,
And the fools that crowd thee so,—
Even thou, who dost thy millions boast,
A village less than Islington wilt grow,
A solitude almost.

ABRAHAM COWLEY.

A FAIR AND HAPPY MILKMAID

A FAIR and happy milkmaid is a country wench, that is so far from making herself beautiful by art, that one look of hers is able to put all face-physic out of countenance. She knows a fair look is but a dumb orator to commend virtue, therefore minds it not. All her excellencies stand in her so silently, as if they had stolen upon her without her knowledge. The lining of her apparel (which is herself) is far better than outsides of tissue; for though she be not arrayed in the spoil of the silkworm, she is decked in innocency, a far better wearing. She doth not, with lying long abed, spoil both her complexion and conditions. Nature hath taught her too immoderate sleep is rust to the soul. She rises therefore with chanticleer, her dame's cock, and at night makes the lamb her curfew. In milking a cow, and straining the teats through her fingers, it seems that so sweet a milk-press makes the milk the whiter or sweeter; for never came almond-glove or aromatic ointment on her palm to taint it. The golden ears of corn fall and kiss her feet when she reaps them, as if they wished to be bound and led prisoners by the same hand that felled them. Her breath is her own, which scents all the year long of June, like a new-made hay-cock. She makes her hand hard with labour, and her heart soft with pity: and when winter evenings fall early (sitting at her merry wheel) she sings a defiance to the giddy wheel of fortune. She doth all things with so sweet a grace, it seems ignorance will not suffer her to do ill, seeing her mind is to do well. She bestows her year's wages at next fair; and in

choosing her garments, counts no bravery in the world like decency. The garden and bee-hive are all her physic and chirurgery, and she lives the longer for it. She dares go alone, and unfold sheep in the night, and fears no manner of ill, because she means none: yet to say truth, she is never alone, for she is still accompanied with old songs, honest thoughts and prayers, but short ones; yet they have their efficacy, in that they are not palled with ensuing idle cogitations. Lastly, her dreams are so chaste, that she dare tell them; only a Friday's dream is all her superstition: that she conceals for fear of anger. Thus lives she, and all her care is she may die in the spring-time to have scores of flowers stuck upon her winding-sheet.

SIR THOMAS OVERBURY—*Characters*, 1614.

A PLAIN COUNTRY FELLOW

Is one that manures his ground well, but lets himself lie fallow and untilled. He has reason enough to do his business, and not enough to be idle or melancholy. He seems to have the judgment of Nebuchadnezzar: for his conversation is among beasts, and his talons none of the shortest, only he eats not grass, because he loves not sallets. His hand guides the plough, and the plough his thoughts, and his ditch and land-mark is the very mound of his meditations. He expostulates with his oxen very understandingly, and speaks Gee and Ree better than English. His mind is not much distracted with objects: but if a good fat cow come in his way, he stands dumb and astonished, and though his haste be never so great, will fix here half an hour's contemplation. His habitation is some poor thatched roof, distinguished from his barn, by the loop-holes that let out smoke, which the rain had long washed through, but for the double ceiling of bacon on the inside, which has hung there from his grandsire's time and is yet to make rashers for posterity. His dinner is his other work, for he sweats at it as much as at his labour; he is a terrible fastener on a piece of beef, and you may hope to stave the Guard off sooner. His religion is a part of his Copy-hold, which he takes from his landlord, and refers it wholly to his discretion. Yet if he give him leave, he is a good Christian to his power (that is) comes to church in his best clothes, and sits there with his neighbours, where he is capable only of two prayers, for rains and fair weather. He apprehends God's blessings only in a good year, or a fat

pasture, and never praises Him but on good ground. Sunday he esteems a day to make merry in, and thinks a bag-pipe as essential to it, as Evening Prayer, where he walks very solemnly after service with his hands coupled behind him. and censures the dancing of his parish. His compliment with his neighbour, is a good thump on the back; and his salutation, commonly some blunt curse. He thinks nothing to be vices but pride and ill husbandry, for which he will gravely dissuade youth and has some thrifty hobnail proverbs to clout his discourse. He is a niggard all the week except only market day, where if his corn sell well, he thinks he may be drunk with a good conscience. His feet never stink so unbecomingly, as when he trots after a lawyer in Westminster Hall, and even cleaves the ground with hard scraping, in beseeching his Worship to take his money. He is sensible of no calamity but the burning of a stack of corn, or the overflowing of a meadow, and thinks Noah's flood the greatest plague that ever was, not because it drowned the world, but spoiled the grass. For death he is never troubled, and if he get in but his harvest before, let it come when it will he cares not.

JOHN EARLE—*Microcosmography*, 1628.

THE TRUMPET CLUB

Habeo senectuti magnam gratiam, quæ mihi sermonis aviditatem auxit, potionis et cibi sustulit.—Tull. *de Senect.*

After having applied my mind with more than ordinary attention to my studies, it is my usual custom to relax and unbend it in the conversation of such as are rather easy than shining companions. This I find particularly necessary for me before I retire to rest, in order to draw my slumbers upon me by degrees, and fall asleep insensibly. This is the particular use I make of a set of heavy honest men, with whom I have passed many hours with much indolence, though not with great pleasure. Their conversation is a kind of preparative for sleep: it takes the mind down from its abstractions, leads it into the familiar traces of thought, and lulls it into that state of tranquillity, which is the condition of a thinking man when he is but half awake. After this, my reader will not be surprised to hear the account which I am about to give of a club of my own contemporaries, among whom I pass two or three hours every evening. This I look upon as taking my first nap before I go to bed. The truth of it is, I should think myself unjust to posterity, as well as to the society at the *Trumpet,* of which I am a member, did not I in some part of my writings give an account of the persons among whom I have passed almost a sixth part of my time for these last forty years. Our club consisted originally of fifteen; but, partly by the severity of the law in arbitrary times, and partly by the natural effects of old age, we are at present reduced to a third part of that number; in which, however, we

have this consolation, that the best company is said to consist of five persons. I must confess, besides the aforementioned benefit which I meet with in the conversation of this select society, I am not the less pleased with the company, in that I find myself the greatest wit among them, and am heard as their oracle in all points of learning and difficulty.

Sir Jeoffery Notch, who is the oldest of the club, has been in possession of the right-hand chair time out of mind, and is the only man among us that has the liberty of stirring the fire. This, our foreman, is a gentleman of an ancient family, that came to a great estate some years before he had discretion, and run it out in hounds, horses, and cock-fighting; for which reason he looks upon himself as an honest, worthy gentleman, who has had misfortunes in the world, and calls every thriving man a pitiful upstart.

Major Matchlock is the next senior, who served in the last civil wars, and has all the battles by heart. He does not think any action in Europe worth talking of since the fight of Marston Moor; and every night tells us of his having been knocked off his horse at the rising of the London apprentices; for which he is in great esteem among us.

Honest old Dick Reptile is the third of our society. He is a good-natured indolent man, who speaks little himself, but laughs at our jokes; and brings his young nephew along with him, a youth of eighteen years old, to show him good company and give him a taste of the world. This young fellow sits generally silent; but whenever he opens his mouth, or laughs at any thing that passes, he is constantly told by his uncle, after a jocular manner, "Ay, ay, Jack, you young men think us fools; but we old men know you are."

The greatest wit of our company, next to myself, is

a bencher of the neighbouring inn, who in his youth frequented the ordinaries about Charing-cross, and pretends to have been intimate with Jack Ogle. He has about ten distichs of Hudibras without book, and never leaves the club until he has applied them all. If any modern wit be mentioned, or any town-frolic spoken of, he shakes his head at the dulness of the present age, and tells us a story of Jack Ogle.

For my own part, I am esteemed among them, because they see I am something respected by others; though at the same time I understand by their behaviour, that I am considered by them as a man of a great deal of learning, but no knowledge of the world; insomuch that the major sometimes, in the height of his military pride, calls me the Philosopher: and Sir Jeoffery, no longer ago than last night, upon a dispute what day of the month it was then in Holland, pulled his pipe out of his mouth, and cried, "What does the scholar say to it?"

Our club meets precisely at six o'clock in the evening; but I did not come last evening until half an hour after seven, by which means I escaped the battle of Naseby, which the major usually begins at about three quarters after six: I found also, that my good friend the bencher had already spent three of his distichs; and only waited an opportunity to hear a sermon spoken of, that he might introduce the couplet where "a stick" rhymes to "ecclesiastic." At my entrance into the room, they were naming a red petticoat and a cloak, by which I found that the bencher had been diverting them with a story of Jack Ogle.

I had no sooner taken my seat, but Sir Jeoffery, to show his good-will towards me, gave me a pipe of his own tobacco, and stirred up the fire. I look upon it as a point of morality, to be obliged by those who endeavour to oblige me; and therefore, in requital for his kindness,

and to set the conversation a-going, I took the best occasion I could to put him upon telling us the story of old Gauntlett, which he always does with very particular concern. He traced up his descent on both sides for several generations, describing his diet and manner of life, with his several battles, and particularly that in which he fell. This Gauntlett was a game cock, upon whose head the knight, in his youth, had won five hundred pounds, and lost two thousand. This naturally set the major upon the account of Edge-hill fight, and ended in a duel of Jack Ogle's.

Old Reptile was extremely attentive to all that was said, though it was the same he had heard every night for these twenty years, and, upon all occasions, winked upon his nephew to mind what passed.

This may suffice to give the world a taste of our innocent conversation, which we spun out until about ten of the clock, when my maid came with a lantern to light me home. I could not but reflect with myself, as I was going out, upon the talkative humour of old men, and the little figure which that part of life makes in one who cannot employ his natural propensity in discourses which would make him venerable. I must own, it makes me very melancholy in company, when I hear a young man begin a story; and have often observed, that one of a quarter of an hour long in a man of five-and-twenty, gathers circumstances every time he tells it, until it grows into a long Canterbury tale of two hours by that time he is threescore.

The only way of avoiding such a trifling and frivolous old age is, to lay up in our way to it such stores of knowledge and observation, as may make us useful and agreeable in our declining years. The mind of man in a long life will become a magazine of wisdom or folly, and will consequently discharge itself in something impertinent

or improving. For which reason, as there is nothing more ridiculous than an old trifling story-teller, so there is nothing more venerable, than one who has turned his experience to the entertainment and advantage of mankind.

In short, we, who are in the last stage of life, and are apt to indulge ourselves in talk, ought to consider, if what we speak be worth being heard, and endeavour to make our discourse like that of Nestor, which Homer compares to the flowing of honey for its sweetness.

I am afraid I shall be thought guilty of this excess I am speaking of, when I cannot conclude without observing, that Milton certainly thought of this passage in Homer, when, in his description of an eloquent spirit, he says,

His tongue dropped manna.

RICHARD STEELE—from *The Tatler*.

THE SPECTATOR CLUB

Ast alii sex
Et plures, uno conclamant ore.—Juv. *Sat.* vii. 167.

The first of our society is a gentleman of Worcestershire, of ancient descent, a baronet, his name Sir Roger de Coverley. His great-grandfather was inventor of that famous country-dance which is called after him. All who know that shire are very well acquainted with the parts and merits of Sir Roger. He is a gentleman that is very singular in his behaviour, but his singularities proceed from his good sense, and are contradictions to the manners of the world only as he thinks the world is in the wrong. However, this humour creates him no enemies, for he does nothing with sourness or obstinacy; and his being unconfined to modes and forms makes him but the readier and more capable to please and oblige all who know him. When he is in town, he lives in Soho-square. It is said, he keeps himself a bachelor by reason he was crossed in love by a perverse beautiful widow of the next county to him. Before this disappointment, Sir Roger was what you call a fine gentleman, had often supped with my Lord Rochester and Sir George Etherege, fought a duel upon his first coming to town, and kicked bully Dawson in a public coffee-house for calling him youngster. But being ill-used by the above-mentioned widow, he was very serious for a year and a half; and though, his temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself, and never dressed afterward. He continues to wear a coat and doublet of the same cut that were in fashion at

the time of his repulse, which, in his merry humours, he tells us, has been in and out twelve times since he first wore it. . . . He is now in his fifty-sixth year, cheerful, gay, and hearty; keeps a good house both in town and country; a great lover of mankind; but there is such a mirthful cast in his behaviour, that he is rather beloved than esteemed.

His tenants grow rich, his servants look satisfied, all the young women profess love to him, and the young men are glad of his company. When he comes into a house he calls the servants by their names, and talks all the way upstairs to a visit. I must not omit, that Sir Roger is a justice of the quorum; that he fills the chair at a quarter-session with great abilities, and three months ago gained universal applause, by explaining a passage in the game act.

The gentleman next in esteem and authority among us is another bachelor, who is a member of the Inner Temple, a man of great probity, wit, and understanding; but he has chosen his place of residence rather to obey the direction of an old humorsome father, than in pursuit of his own inclinations. He was placed there to study the laws of the land, and is the most learned of any of the house in those of the stage. Aristotle and Longinus are much better understood by him than Littleton or Coke. The father sends up every post questions relating to marriage-articles, leases, and tenures in the neighbourhood; all which questions he agrees with an attorney to answer and take care of in the lump. He is studying the passions themselves when he should be inquiring into the debates among men which arise from them. He knows the argument of each of the orations of Demosthenes and Tully, but not one case in the reports of our own courts. No one ever took him for a fool, but none, except his intimate friends, know he has

a great deal of wit. This turn makes him at once both disinterested and agreeable: as few of his thoughts are drawn from business, they are most of them fit for conversation. His taste of books is a little too just for the age he lives in; he has read all, but approves of very few. His familiarity with the customs, manners, actions, and writings of the ancients, makes him a very delicate observer of what occurs to him in the present world. He is an excellent critic, and the time of the play is his hour of business; exactly at five he passes through New-Inn, crosses through Russell-court, and takes a turn at Will's till the play begins; he has his shoes rubbed and his periwig powdered at the barber's as you go into the Rose. It is for the good of the audience when he is at a play, for the actors have an ambition to please him.

The person of next consideration is Sir Andrew Freeport, a merchant of great eminence in the city of London; a person of indefatigable industry, strong reason, and great experience. His notions of trade are noble and generous, and (as every rich man has usually some sly way of jesting, which would make no great figure were he not a rich man) he calls the sea the British Common. He is acquainted with commerce in all its parts, and will tell you that it is a stupid and barbarous way to extend dominion by arms: for true power is to be got by arts and industry. He will often argue, that if this part of our trade were well cultivated, we should gain from one nation; and if another, from another. I have heard him prove, that diligence makes more lasting acquisitions than valour, and that sloth has ruined more nations than the sword. He abounds in several frugal maxims, amongst which the greatest favourite is, "A penny saved is a penny got." A general trader of good sense is pleasanter company than a general scholar; and Sir Andrew having a natural unaffected eloquence, the

perspicuity of his discourse gives the same pleasure that wit would in another man. He has made his fortunes himself; and says that England may be richer than other kingdoms, by as plain methods as he himself is richer than other men; though at the same time I can say this of him, that there is not a point in the compass, but blows home a ship in which he is an owner.

Next to Sir Andrew in the club-room sits Captain Sentry, a gentleman of great courage, good understanding, but invincible modesty. He is one of those that deserve very well, but are very awkward at putting their talents within the observation of such as should take notice of them. He was some years a captain, and behaved himself with great gallantry in several engagements and at several sieges; but having a small estate of his own, and being next heir to Sir Roger, he has quitted a way of life in which no man can rise suitably to his merit, who is not something of a courtier as well as a soldier. I have heard him often lament, that in a profession where merit is placed in so conspicuous a view, impudence should get the better of modesty. When he had talked to this purpose, I never heard him make a sour expression, but frankly confess that he left the world, because he was not fit for it. A strict honesty, and an even regular behaviour, are in themselves obstacles to him that must press through crowds, who endeavour at the same end with himself, the favour of a commander. He will, however, in his way of talk excuse generals, for not disposing according to men's desert, or inquiring into it; for, says he, that great man who has a mind to help me, has as many to break through to come at me, as I have to come at him: therefore he will conclude, that the man who would make a figure, especially in a military way, must get over all false modesty, and assist his patron against the importunity of other pretenders,

by a proper assurance in his own vindication. He says it is a civil cowardice to be backward in asserting what you ought to expect, as it is a military fear to be slow in attacking when it is your duty. With this candour does the gentleman speak of himself and others. The same frankness runs through all his conversation. The military part of his life has furnished him with many adventures, in the relation of which he is very agreeable to the company; for he is never overbearing, though accustomed to command men in the utmost degree below him; nor ever too obsequious, from a habit of obeying men highly above him.

But that our society may not appear a set of humorists, unacquainted with the gallantries and pleasures of the age, we have amongst us the gallant Will Honeycomb, a gentleman who, according to his years, should be in the decline of his life, but having been very careful of his person, and always had a very easy fortune, time has made but very little impression, either by wrinkles on his forehead, or traces on his brain. His person is well turned, and of a good height. He is very ready at that sort of discourse with which men usually entertain women. He has all his life dressed very well, and remembers habits as others do men. He can smile when one speaks to him, and laughs easily. He knows the history of every mode, and can inform you from which of the French king's wenches our wives and daughters had this manner of curling their hair, that way of placing their hoods; . . . and whose vanity to show her foot made that part of the dress so short in such a year. In a word, all his conversation and knowledge has been in the female world. As other men of his age will take notice to you what such a minister said upon such an occasion, he will tell you, when the Duke of Monmouth danced at court, such a woman was then smitten—

another was taken with him at the head of his troop in the Park. In all these important relations, he has ever about the same time received a kind glance, or a blow of a fan from some celebrated beauty, mother of the present Lord Such-a-one. . . . This way of talking of his very much enlivens the conversation among us of a more sedate turn; and I find there is not one of the company, but myself, who rarely speak at all, but speaks of him as of that sort of man who is usually called a well-bred fine gentleman. To conclude his character, where women are not concerned, he is an honest worthy man.

I cannot tell whether I am to account him whom I am next to speak of, as one of our company; for he visits us but seldom; but when he does, it adds to every man else a new enjoyment of himself. He is a clergyman, a very philosophic man, of general learning, great sanctity of life, and the most exact good breeding. He has the misfortune to be of a very weak constitution, and consequently, cannot accept of such cares and business as preferments in his function would oblige him to; he is therefore among divines what a chamber-counsellor is among lawyers. The probity of his mind, and the integrity of his life, create him followers, as being eloquent or loud advances others. He seldom introduces the subject he speaks upon; but we are so far gone in years, that he observes, when he is among us, an earnestness to have him fall on some divine topic, which he always treats with much authority, as one who has no interest in this world, as one who is hastening to the object of all his wishes, and conceives hope from his decays and infirmities. These are my ordinary companions.

RICHARD STEELE—from *The Spectator.*

SIR ROGER AND WILL WIMBLE

Gratis anhelans, multa agendo nihil agens.
PHÆDR. *Fab.* v. 2.

As I was yesterday morning walking with Sir Roger before his house, a country fellow brought him a huge fish, which, he told him, Mr. Will Wimble had caught that morning; and that he presented it with his service to him, and intended to come and dine with him. At the same time he delivered a letter which my friend read to me as soon as the messenger left him.

SIR ROGER,

I desire you to accept of a jack, which is the best I have caught this season. I intend to come and stay with you a week, and see how the perch bite in the Black River. I observed with some concern, the last time I saw you upon the bowling-green, that your whip wanted a lash to it; I will bring half-a-dozen with me that I twisted last week, which I hope will serve you all the time you are in the country. I have not been out of the saddle for six days past, having been at Eton with Sir John's eldest son. He takes to his learning hugely.—I am, Sir, your humble servant,

WILL WIMBLE.

This extraordinary letter, and message that accompanied it, made me very curious to know the character and quality of the gentleman who sent them; which I found to be as follows. Will Wimble is younger brother to a baronet, and descended of the ancient family of the

Wimbles. He is now between forty and fifty: but being bred to no business, and born to no estate, he generally lives with his elder brother as superintendent of his game. He hunts a pack of dogs better than any man in the country, and is very famous for finding out a hare. He is extremely well versed in all the little handicrafts of an idle man: he makes a May-fly to a miracle; and furnishes the whole country with angle rods. As he is a good-natured officious fellow, and very much esteemed upon account of his family, he is a welcome guest at every house, and keeps up a good correspondence among all the gentlemen about him. He carries a tulip-root in his pocket from one to another, or exchanges a puppy between a couple of friends that live perhaps in the opposite sides of the county. Will is a particular favourite of all the young heirs, whom he frequently obliges with a net that he has weaved, or a setting dog that he has made himself. He now and then presents a pair of garters of his own knitting to their mothers or sisters; and raises a great deal of mirth among them, by inquiring as often as he meets them, how they wear? These gentleman-like manufactures and obliging little humours make Will the darling of the country.

Sir Roger was proceeding in the character of him, when we saw him make up to us with two or three hazel twigs in his hand that he had cut in Sir Roger's woods, as he came through them in his way to the house. I was very much pleased to observe, on one side the hearty and sincere welcome with which Sir Roger received him, and on the other the secret joy which his guest discovered at sight of the good old knight. After the first salutes were over, Will desired Sir Roger to lend him one of his servants to carry a set of shuttle-cocks he had with him in a little box to a lady that lived about a mile off, to whom it seems he had promised such a present for above

this half year. Sir Roger's back was no sooner turned but honest Will began to tell me of a large cock-pheasant that he had sprung in one of the neighbouring woods, with two or three other adventures of the same nature. Odd and uncommon characters are the game that I look for, and most delight in; for which reason I was as much pleased with the novelty of the person that talked with me, as he could be for his life with the springing of a pheasant, and therefore listened to him with more than ordinary attention.

In the midst of his discourse the bell rung to dinner, where the gentleman I have been speaking of had the pleasure of seeing the huge jack he had caught, served up for the first dish in a most sumptuous manner. Upon our sitting down to it, he gave us a long account how he had hooked it, played with it, foiled it, and at length drew it out upon the bank, with several other particulars that lasted all the first course. A dish of wild fowl that came afterwards furnished conversation for the rest of the dinner, which concluded with a late invention of Will's for improving the quail-pipe.

Upon withdrawing into my room after dinner, I was secretly touched with compassion towards the honest gentleman that had dined with us; and could not but consider with a great deal of concern, how so good an heart and such busy hands were wholly employed in trifles; that so much humanity should be so little beneficial to others, and so much industry so little advantageous to himself. The same temper of mind and application to affairs might have recommended him to the public esteem, and might have raised his fortune in another station of life. What good to his country or himself might not a trader or a merchant have done with such useful though ordinary qualifications!

Will Wimble's is the case of many a younger brother

of a great family, who had rather see their children starve like gentlemen, than thrive in a trade or profession that is beneath their quality. This humour fills several parts of Europe with pride and beggary. It is the happiness of a trading nation like ours, that the younger sons, though incapable of any liberal art or profession, may be placed in such a way of life as may perhaps enable them to vie with the best of their family: accordingly we find several citizens that were launched into the world with narrow fortunes, rising by honest industry to greater estates than those of their elder brothers. It is not improbable but Will was formerly tried at divinity, law, or physic; and that, finding his genius did not lie that way, his parents at length gave him up to his own inventions. But certainly, however improper he might have been for studies of a higher nature, he was perfectly well turned for the occupations of trade and commerce. As I think this is a point which cannot be too much inculcated, I shall desire my reader to compare what I have here written with what I have said in my twenty-first speculation.

JOSEPH ADDISON—from *The Spectator*.

MEDITATIONS IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres. O beate Sesti,
Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam.
Iam te premet nox, fabulæque manes,
Et domus exilis Plutonia. HOR.

WHEN I am in a serious humour, I very often walk by myself in Westminster Abbey, where the gloominess of the place, and the use to which it is applied, with the solemnity of the building, and the condition of the people who lie in it, are apt to fill the mind with a kind of melancholy, or rather thoughtfulness, that is not disagreeable. I yesterday passed a whole afternoon in the churchyard, the cloisters, and the church, amusing myself with the tombstones and inscriptions that I met with in those several regions of the dead. Most of them recorded nothing else of the buried person, but that he was born upon one day, and died upon another; the whole history of his life being comprehended in those two circumstances that are common to all mankind. I could not but look upon these registers of existence, whether of brass or marble, as a kind of satire upon the departed persons; who had left no other memorial of them, but that they were born and that they died. They put me in mind of several persons mentioned in the battles of heroic poems, who have sounding names given them, for no other reason but that they may be killed, and are celebrated for nothing but being knocked on the head.

Γλαῦκόν τε Μέδοντά τε Θερσίλοχόν τε. HOM.
Glaucumque, Medontaque, Thersilochumque. VIRG.

The life of these men is finely described in holy writ by "the path of an arrow," which is immediately closed up and lost.

Upon my going into the church, I entertained myself with the digging of a grave; and saw in every shovelful of it that was thrown up, the fragment of a bone or skull intermixed with a kind of fresh mouldering earth, that some time or other had a place in the composition of a human body. Upon this I began to consider with myself what innumerable multitudes of people lay confused together under the pavement of that ancient cathedral; how men and women, friends and enemies, priests and soldiers, monks and prebendaries, were crumbled amongst one another, and blended together in the same common mass; how beauty, strength, and youth, with old age, weakness, and deformity, lay undistinguished in the same promiscuous heap of matter.

After having thus surveyed this great magazine of mortality, as it were, in the lump; I examined it more particularly by the accounts which I found on several of the monuments which are raised in every quarter of that ancient fabric. Some of them were covered with such extravagant epitaphs, that, if it were possible for the dead person to be acquainted with them, he would blush at the praises which his friends have bestowed upon him. There are others so excessively modest, that they deliver the character of the person departed in Greek or Hebrew, and by that means are not understood once in a twelvemonth. In the poetical quarter, I found there were poets who had no monuments, and monuments which had no poets. I observed, indeed, that the present war had filled the church with many of these uninhabited monuments, which had been erected to the memory of persons whose bodies were perhaps buried in the plains of Blenheim, or in the bosom of the ocean.

I could not but be very much delighted with several modern epitaphs which are written with great elegance of expression and justness of thought, and therefore do honour to the living as well as to the dead. As a foreigner is very apt to conceive an idea of the ignorance or politeness of a nation from the turn of their public monuments and inscriptions, they should be submitted to the perusal of men of learning and genius, before they are put in execution. Sir Cloudesley Shovel's monument has very often given me great offence: instead of the brave rough English Admiral, which was the distinguishing character of that plain gallant man, he is represented on his tomb by the figure of a beau, dressed in a long periwig, and reposing himself upon velvet cushions under a canopy of state. The inscription is answerable to the monument; for instead of celebrating the many remarkable actions he had performed in the service of his country, it acquaints us only with the manner of his death, in which it was impossible for him to reap any honour. The Dutch, whom we are apt to despise for want of genius, show an infinitely greater taste of antiquity and politeness in their buildings and works of this nature, than what we meet with in those of our own country. The monuments of their admirals, which have been erected at the public expense, represent them like themselves; and are adorned with rostral crowns and naval ornaments, with beautiful festoons of seaweed, shells, and coral.

But to return to our subject. I have left the repository of our English kings for the contemplation of another day, when I shall find my mind disposed for so serious an amusement. I know that entertainments of this nature are apt to raise dark and dismal thoughts in timorous minds and gloomy imaginations; but for my own part, though I am always serious, I do not know

what it is to be melancholy; and can therefore take a view of nature in her deep and solemn scenes, with the same pleasure as in her most gay and delightful ones. By this means I can improve myself with those objects which others consider with terror. When I look upon the tombs of the great, every emotion of envy dies in me; when I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out; when I meet with the grief of parents upon a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion; when I see the tomb of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow; when I see kings lying by those who deposed them, when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind. When I read the several dates of the tombs, of some that died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great day when we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearance together.

JOSEPH ADDISON—from *The Spectator*, March 30, 1711.

ON STYLE

The following letter has laid before me many great and manifest evils in the world of letters, which I had overlooked; but they open to me a very busy scene, and it will require no small care and application to amend errors which are become so universal. The affectation of politeness is exposed in this epistle with a great deal of wit and discernment; so that whatever discourses I may fall into hereafter upon the subjects the writer treats of, I shall at present lay the matter before the world, without the least alteration from the words of my correspondent.

"*To Isaac Bickerstaff, Esquire.*

"Sir,

"There are some abuses among us of great consequence, the reformation of which is properly your province; though, as far as I have been conversant in your papers, you have not yet considered them. These are the deplorable ignorance that for some years hath reigned among our English writers, the great depravity of our taste, and the continual corruption of our style. I say nothing here of those who handle particular sciences, divinity, law, physic, and the like; I mean the traders in history, politics, and the *belles lettres*, together with those by whom books are not translated, but as the common expressions are, *done* out of French, Latin, or other language, and made English. I cannot but observe to you that until of late years a Grub Street book was always bound in sheep-skin, with suitable print and paper, the price never above a shilling, and taken off

wholly by common tradesmen or country pedlars; but now they appear in all sizes and shapes, and in all places. They are handed about from lapfuls in every coffee-house to persons of quality; are shown in Westminster Hall and the Court of Requests. You may see them gilt, and in royal paper of five or six hundred pages, and rated accordingly. I would engage to furnish you with a catalogue of English books, published within the compass of seven years past, which at the first hand would cost you a hundred pounds, wherein you shall not be able to find ten lines together of common grammar or common sense.

"These two evils, ignorance and want of taste, have produced a third; I mean the continual corruption of our English tongue, which, without some timely remedy, will suffer more by the false refinements of twenty years past than it hath been improved in the foregoing hundred. And this is what I design chiefly to enlarge upon, leaving the former evils to your animadversion.

"But instead of giving you a list of the late refinements crept into our language, I here send you the copy of a letter I received, some time ago, from a most accomplished person in this way of writing; upon which I shall make some remarks. It is in these terms:

"'Sir,

"'I *cou'd n't* get the things you sent for all *about town*—I *thot* to *ha* come down myself, and then *I'd h' brot'um*; but I *ha'nt don 't*, and I believe I *can't do 't*, that's *pozz*—Tom begins to *gi 'mself* airs, because *he's* going with the *plenipo's*—'T is said the *French* king will *bamboozl us agen*, which causes many speculations. The *Jacks* and others of that *kidney* are very *uppish* and *alert upon 't*, as you may see by their *phizz's*—Will Hazard has got the *hipps*, having lost *to the tune of* five *hundr'd* pound, *tho'* he understands play very well, *no body*

better. He has *promis't* me upon *rep*, to leave off play; but you know 't is a weakness *he's* too apt to *give in to, tho'* he has as much wit as any man, *no body more*. He has lain *incog* ever since—The *mob's* very quiet with us now—I believe you *that I banter'd* you in my last, like a *country put*—I *shan't* leave town this month,' etc.

"This letter is in every point an admirable pattern of the present polite way of writing; nor is it of less authority for being an epistle. You may gather every flower in it, with a thousand more of equal sweetness, from the books, pamphlets, and single papers offered us every day in the coffee-houses: and these are the beauties introduced to supply the want of wit, sense, humour, and learning, which formerly were looked upon as qualifications for a writer. If a man of wit, who died forty years ago, were to rise from the grave on purpose, how would he be able to read this letter? and after he had got through that difficulty, how would he be able to understand it? The first thing that strikes your eye, is the breaks at the end of almost every sentence; of which I know not the use, only that it is a refinement, and very frequently practised. Then you will observe the abbreviations and elisions, by which consonants of most obdurate sound are joined together, without one softening vowel to intervene; and all this only to make one syllable of two, directly contrary to the example of the Greek and Romans, altogether of the Gothic strain, and a natural tendency towards relapsing into barbarity, which delights in monosyllables, and uniting of mute consonants, as it is observable in all the northern languages. And this is still more visible in the next refinement, which consists in pronouncing the first syllable in a word that has many, and dismissing the rest, such as *phizz, hipps, mob, pozz, rep*, and many more, when we are already overloaded with monosyllables, which are the

disgrace of our language. Thus we cram one syllable, and cut off the rest, as the owl fattened her mice after she had bitten off their legs to prevent them from running away; and if ours be the same reason for maiming our words, it will certainly answer the end; for I am sure no other nation will desire to borrow them. Some words are hitherto but fairly split, and therefore only in their way to perfection, as *incog* and *plenipo*: but in a short time it is to be hoped they will be further docked to *inc* and *plen*. This reflection has made me of late years very impatient for a peace, which I believe would save the lives of many brave words, as well as men. The war has introduced abundance of polysyllables, which will never be able to live many more campaigns: *speculations, operations, preliminaries, ambassadors, pallisadoes, communication, circumvallation, battalions*: as numerous as they are, if they attack us too frequently in our coffee-houses, we shall certainly put them to flight, and cut off the rear.

"The third refinement observable in the letter I send you consists in the choice of certain words, invented by some pretty fellows, such as *banter, bamboozle, country put*, and *kidney*, as it is there applied; some of which are now struggling for the vogue, and others are in possession of it. I have done my utmost for some years past to stop the progress of *mob* and *banter*, but have been plainly borne down by numbers, and betrayed by those who promised to assist me.

"In the last place, you are to take notice of certain choice phrases scattered through the letter, some of them tolerable enough, until they were worn to rags by servile imitators. You might easily find them though they were not in a different print, and therefore I need not disturb them.

"These are the false refinements in our style which

you ought to correct: first, by argument and fair means; but if these fail, I think you are to make use of your authority as Censor, and by an annual *Index Expurgatorius* expunge all words and phrases that are offensive to good sense, and condemn those barbarous mutilations of vowels and syllables. In this last point the usual pretence is, that they spell as they speak. A noble standard for language! to depend upon the caprice of every coxcomb who, because words are the clothing of our thoughts, cuts them out and shapes them as he pleases, and changes them oftener than his dress. I believe all reasonable people would be content that such refiners were more sparing in their words, and liberal in their syllables: and upon this head I should be glad you would bestow some advice upon several young readers in our churches, who, coming up from the university full fraught with admiration of our town politeness, will needs correct the style of their prayer-books. In reading the Absolution, they are very careful to say *pardons* and *absolves*: and in the prayer for the royal family, it must be *endue'um, enrich'um, prosper'um,* and *bring'um.* Then in their sermons they use all the modern terms of art, *sham, banter, mob, bubble, bully, cutting, shuffling,* and *palming*; all which, and many more of the like stamp, as I have heard them often in the pulpit from such young sophisters, so I have read them in some of *those sermons that have made most noise of late.* The design, it seems, is to avoid the dreadful imputation of pedantry; to show us that they know the town, understand men and manners, and have not been poring upon old unfashionable books in the university.

"I should be glad to see you the instrument of introducing into our style that simplicity which is the best and truest ornament of most things in life, which the politer age always aimed at in their building and dress,

simplex munditiis, as well as in their productions of wit. It is manifest that all new affected modes of speech, whether borrowed from the court, the town, or the theatre, are the first perishing parts in any language; and, as I could prove by many hundred instances, have been so in ours. The writings of Hooker, who was a country clergyman, and of Parsons the Jesuit, both in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, are in a style that, with very few allowances, would not offend any present reader, and are much more clear and intelligible than those of Sir Harry Wotton, Sir Robert Naunton, Osborn, Daniel the historian, and several others who wrote later; but being men of the court, and affecting the phrases then in fashion, they are often either not to be understood, or appear perfectly ridiculous.

"What remedies are to be applied to these evils I have not room to consider, having, I fear, already taken up most of your paper. Besides, I think it is our office only to represent abuses, and yours to redress them. I am, with great respect, Sir, yours," etc.

JONATHAN SWIFT—from *The Bickerstaff Papers* (*Tatler* No. 230).

BEAU TIBBS AT HOME

I AM apt to fancy I have contracted a new acquaintance whom it will be no easy matter to shake off. My little beau of yesterday overtook me again in one of the public walks, and slapping me on the shoulder, saluted me with an air of the most perfect familiarity. His dress was the same as usual, except that he had more powder in his hair, wore a dirtier shirt, a pair of temple spectacles, and his hat under his arm.

As I knew him to be a harmless, amusing little thing, I could not return his smiles with any degree of severity: so we walked forward on terms of the utmost intimacy, and in a few minutes discussed all the usual topics preliminary to particular conversation.

The oddities that marked his character, however, soon began to appear; he bowed to several well-dressed persons, who, by their manner of returning the compliment, appeared perfect strangers. At intervals he drew out a pocket-book, seeming to take memorandums before all the company, with much importance and assiduity. In this manner he led me through the length of the whole walk, fretting at his absurdities, and fancying myself laughed at not less than him by every spectator.

When we were got to the end of the procession, "Blast me," cries he, with an air of vivacity, "I never saw the Park so thin in my life before; there's no company at all to-day. Not a single face to be seen."—"No company," interrupted I peevishly; "no company where there is such a crowd! why man, there's too much. What are the thousands that have been laughing at us but com-

pany?"—"Lard, my dear," returned he, with the utmost good-humour, "you seem immensely chagrined; but, blast me, when the world laughs at me, I laugh at all the world, and so we are even. My Lord Trip, Bill Squash the Creolian, and I, sometimes make a party at being ridiculous; and so we say and do a thousand things for the joke. But I see you are grave, and if you are for a fine grave sentimental companion, you shall dine with me and my wife to-day, I must insist on't: I'll introduce you to Mrs. Tibbs, a lady of as elegant qualifications as any in nature; she was bred, but that's between ourselves, under the inspection of the Countess of All-night. A charming body of voice, but no more of that, she will give us a song. You shall see my little girl, too, Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Tibbs, a sweet pretty creature: I design her for my Lord Drumstick's eldest son, but that's in friendship, let it go no farther; she's but six years old, and yet she walks a minuet, and plays on the guitar immensely already. I intend she shall be as perfect as possible in every accomplishment. In the first place, I'll make her a scholar; I'll teach her Greek myself, and learn that language purposely to instruct her; but let that be a secret."

Thus saying, without waiting for a reply, he took me by the arm, and hauled me along. We passed through many dark alleys and winding ways; for, from some motives to me unknown, he seemed to have a particular aversion to every street; at last, however, we got to the door of a dismal-looking house in the outlets of the town, where he informed me he chose to reside for the benefit of the air.

We entered the lower door, which ever seemed to lie most hospitably open; and I began to ascend an old and creaking staircase, when, as he mounted to show me the way, he demanded whether I delighted in prospects, to

which answering in the affirmative, "Then," says he, "I shall show you one of the most charming in the world out of my windows; we shall see the ships sailing, and the whole country for twenty miles round, tip-top, quite high. My Lord Swamp would give ten thousand guineas for such a one; but, as I sometimes pleasantly tell him, I always like to keep my prospects at home, that my friends may see me the oftener."

By this time we were arrived as high as the stairs would permit us to ascend, till we came to what he was facetiously pleased to call the first floor down the chimney, and knocking at the door, a voice from within demanded, "Who's there?" My conductor answered, that it was he. But this not satisfying the querist, the voice again repeated the demand; to which he answered louder than before; and now the door was opened by an old woman with cautious reluctance.

When we were got in, he welcomed me to his house with great ceremony, and turning to the old woman, asked where was her lady? "Good troth," replied she, in a peculiar dialect, "she's washing your two shirts at the next door, because they have taken an oath against lending out the tub any longer."—"My two shirts!" cries he, in a tone that faultered with confusion, "what does the idiot mean?"—"I ken what I mean well enough," replied the other; "she's washing your two shirts next door, because"—"Fire and fury, no more of thy stupid explanations," cried he. "Go and inform her we have got company. Were that Scotch hag to be for ever in the family, she would never learn politeness, nor forget that absurd poisonous accent of hers, or testify the smallest specimen of breeding or high-life; and yet it is very surprising too, as I had her from a parliament-man, a friend of mine, from the Highlands, one of the politest men in the world: but that's a secret."

We waited some time for Mrs. Tibbs's arrival, during which interval I had a full opportunity of surveying the chamber and all its furniture; which consisted of four chairs with old wrought bottoms, that he assured me were his wife's embroidery; a square table that had been once japanned, a cradle in one corner, a lumbering cabinet in the other; a broken shepherdess, and a mandarin without a head, were stuck over the chimney; and round the walls, several paltry, unframed pictures, which he observed were all his own drawing. "What do you think, sir, of that head in a corner, done in the manner of Grisoni? there's the true keeping in it; it's my own face, and though there happens to be no likeness, a countess offered me a hundred for its fellow: I refused her, for, hang it, that would be mechanical, you know."

The wife at last made her appearance, at once a slattern and a coquet; much emaciated, but still carrying the remains of beauty. She made twenty apologies for being seen in such odious dishabille, but hoped to be excused, as she had staid out all night at the Gardens with the countess, who was excessively fond of the horns. "And, indeed, my dear," added she, turning to her husband, "his lordship drank your health in a bumper."—"Poor Jack," cries he, "a dear good-natured creature, I know he loves me; but I hope, my dear, you have given orders for dinner; you need make no great preparations neither, there are but three of us, something elegant, and little will do; a turbot, an ortolan, or a—" "Or what do you think, my dear," interrupts the wife, "of a nice pretty bit of ox-cheek, piping hot, and dressed with a little of my own sauce?"—"The very thing," replies he, "it will eat best with some smart bottled beer; but be sure to let's have the sauce his grace was so fond of. I hate your immense loads of meat, that is country all over; extreme

disgusting to those who are in the least acquainted with high life."

By this time my curiosity began to abate, and my appetite to increase; the company of fools may at first make us smile, but at last never fails of rendering us melancholy; I therefore pretended to recollect a prior engagement, and after having shown my respect to the house, according to the fashion of the English, by giving the old servant a piece of money at the door, I took my leave. Mr. Tibbs assured me that dinner, if I staid, would be ready at least in less than two hours.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH—from *The Public Ledger*.

ON THE INSTABILITY OF WORLD GRANDEUR

An alehouse keeper near Islington, who had long lived at the sign of the French King, upon the commencement of the last war with France pulled down his old sign, and put up the Queen of Hungary. Under the influence of her red face and golden sceptre, he continued to sell ale till she was no longer the favourite of his customers; he changed her, therefore, some time ago, for the King of Prussia, who may probably be changed in turn for the next great man that shall be set up for vulgar admiration.

Our publican in this imitates the great exactly, who deal out their figures, one after the other, to the gazing crowd beneath them. When we have sufficiently wondered at one, that is taken in, and another exhibited in its room, which seldom holds its station long, for the mob are ever pleased with variety.

I must own I have such an indifferent opinion of the vulgar, that I am ever led to suspect that merit which raises their shout; at least I am certain to find those great, and sometimes good men, who find satisfaction in such acclamations, made worse by it; and history has too frequently taught me, that the head which has grown this day giddy with the roar of the million, has the very next been fixed upon a pole.

As Alexander VI was entering a little town in the neighbourhood of Rome, which had been just evacuated by the enemy, he perceived the townsmen busy in the market-place in pulling down from a gibbet a figure, which had been designed to represent himself. There were also some knocking down a neighbouring statue of

one of the Orsini family, with whom he was at war, in order to put Alexander's effigy, when taken down, in its place. It is possible a man who knew less of the world would have condemned the adulation of those barefaced flatterers; but Alexander seemed pleased at their zeal, and, turning to Borgia his son, said with a smile, *Vides, mi fili, quam leve discrimen patibulum inter et statuam.* "You see, my son, the small difference between a gibbet and a statue." If the great could be taught any lesson, this might serve to teach them upon how weak a foundation their glory stands, which is built upon popular applause; for as such praise what seems like merit, they as quickly condemn what has only the appearance of guilt.

Popular glory is a perfect coquette: her lovers must toil, feel every inquietude, indulge every caprice, and perhaps at last be jilted into the bargain. True glory, on the other hand, resembles a woman of sense: her admirers must play no tricks; they feel no great anxiety, for they are sure in the end of being rewarded in proportion to their merit. When Swift used to appear in public, he generally had the mob shouting in his train. "Pox take these fools!" he would say, "how much joy might all this bawling give my Lord Mayor!"

We have seen those virtues which have, while living, retired from the public eye, generally transmitted to posterity as the truest objects of admiration and praise. Perhaps the character of the late Duke of Marlborough may one day be set up, even above that of his more talked-of predecessor; since an assemblage of all the mild and amiable virtues is far superior to those vulgarly called the great ones. I must be pardoned for this short tribute to the memory of a man who, while living, would as much detest to receive anything that wore the appearance of flattery, as I should to offer it.

I know not how to turn so trite a subject out of the beaten road of common-place, except by illustrating it, rather by the assistance of my memory than my judgment, and instead of making reflections by telling a story.

A Chinese, who had long studied the works of Confucius, who knew the characters of fourteen thousand words, and could read a great part of every book that came in his way, once took it into his head to travel into Europe, and observe the customs of a people whom he thought not very much inferior even to his own countrymen, in the arts of refining upon every pleasure. Upon his arrival at Amsterdam, his passion for letters naturally led him to a bookseller's shop: and, as he could speak a little Dutch, he civilly asked the bookseller for the works of the immortal Ilixofou. The bookseller assured him he had never heard the book mentioned before. "What! have you never heard of that immortal poet?" returned the other, much surprised; "that light of the eyes, that favourite of kings, that rose of perfection! I suppose you know nothing of the immortal Fipsihihi, second cousin to the moon?"—"Nothing at all, indeed, sir," returned the other—"Alas!" cries our traveller, "to what purpose, then, has one of these fasted to death, and the other offered himself up as a sacrifice to the Tartarean enemy, to gain a renown which has never travelled beyond the precincts of China!"

There is scarcely a village in Europe, and not one university, that is not thus furnished with its little great men. The head of a petty corporation, who opposes the designs of a prince who would tyrannically force his subjects to save their best clothes for Sundays—the puny pedant who finds one undiscovered property in the polype, describes an unheeded process in the skeleton of a mole, and whose mind, like his microscope, perceives

nature only in detail—the rhymer who makes smooth verses, and paints to our imagination when he should only speak to our hearts—all equally fancy themselves walking forward to immortality, and desire the crowd behind them to look on. The crowd takes them at their word. Patriot, philosopher, and poet, are shouted in their train. Where was there ever so much merit seen? no times so important as our own! ages yet unborn shall gaze with wonder and applause! To such music the important pigmy moves forward, bustling and swelling, and aptly compared to a puddle in a storm.

I have lived to see generals, who once had crowds hallooing after them wherever they went, who were bepraised by newspapers and magazines, those echoes of the voice of the vulgar, and yet they have long sunk into merited obscurity, with scarcely even an epitaph left to flatter. A few years ago, the herring-fishery employed all Grub Street; it was the topic in every coffee-house, and the burden of every ballad. We were to drag up oceans of gold from the bottom of the sea; we were to supply all Europe with herrings upon our own terms. At present we hear no more of all this. We have fished up very little gold that I can learn; nor do we furnish the world with herrings as was expected. Let us wait but a few years longer, and we shall find all our expectations a herring-fishery.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH—from *The Bee*.

THE INDIAN JUGGLERS

Coming forward and seating himself on the ground in his white dress and tightened turban, the chief of the Indian Jugglers begins with tossing up two brass balls, which is what any of us could do, and concludes with keeping up four at the same time, which is what none of us could do to save our lives, nor if we were to take our whole lives to do it in. Is it then a trifling power we see at work, or is it not something next to miraculous? It is the utmost stretch of human ingenuity, which nothing but the bending the faculties of body and mind to it from the tenderest infancy with incessant, ever-anxious application up to manhood, can accomplish or make even a slight approach to. Man, thou art a wonderful animal, and thy ways past finding out! Thou canst do strange things, but thou turnest them to little account!—To conceive of this effort of extraordinary dexterity distracts the imagination and makes admiration breathless. Yet it costs nothing to the performer, any more than if it were a mere mechanical deception with which he had nothing to do but to watch and laugh at the astonishment of the spectators. A single error of a hair's-breadth, of the smallest conceivable portion of time, would be fatal: the precision of the movements must be like a mathematical truth, their rapidity is like lightning. To catch four balls in succession in less than a second of time, and deliver them back so as to return with seeming consciousness to the hand again, to make them revolve round him at certain intervals, like the planets in their spheres, to make them chase one another

like sparkles of fire, or shoot up like flowers or meteors, to throw them behind his back and twine them round his neck like ribbons or like serpents, to do what appears an impossibility, and to do it with all the ease, the grace, the carelessness imaginable, to laugh at, to play with the glittering mockeries, to follow them with his eye as if he could fascinate them with its lambent fire, or as if he had only to see that they kept time with the music on the stage—there is something in all this which he who does not admire may be quite sure he never really admired any thing in the whole course of his life. It is skill surmounting difficulty, and beauty triumphing over skill. It seems as if the difficulty once mastered naturally resolved itself into ease and grace, and as if to be overcome at all, it must be overcome without an effort. The smallest awkwardness or want of pliancy or self-possession would stop the whole process. It is the work of witchcraft, and yet sport for children. Some of the other feats are quite as curious and wonderful, such as the balancing the artificial tree and shooting a bird from each branch through a quill; though none of them have the elegance or facility of the keeping up of the brass balls. You are in pain for the result, and glad when the experiment is over; they are not accompanied with the same unmixed, unchecked delight as the former; and I would not give much to be merely astonished without being pleased at the same time. As to the swallowing of the sword, the police ought to interfere to prevent it. When I saw the Indian Juggler do the same things before, his feet were bare, and he had large rings on the toes, which kept turning round all the time of the performance, as if they moved of themselves.—The hearing a speech in Parliament, drawled or stammered out by the Honourable Member or the Noble Lord, the ringing the changes on their common-places, which any one could repeat after

them as well as they, stirs me not a jot, shakes not my good opinion of myself: but the seeing the Indian Jugglers does. It makes me ashamed of myself. I ask what there is that I can do as well as this? Nothing. What have I been doing all my life? Have I been idle, or have I nothing to show for all my labour and pains? Or have I passed my time in pouring words like water into empty sieves, rolling a stone up a hill and then down again, trying to prove an argument in the teeth of facts, and looking for causes in the dark, and not finding them? Is there no one thing in which I can challenge competition, that I can bring as an instance of exact perfection, in which others cannot find a flaw? The utmost I can pretend to is to write a description of what this fellow can do. I can write a book: so can many others who have not even learned to spell. What abortions are these Essays! What errors, what ill-pieced transitions, what crooked reasons, what lame conclusions! How little is made out, and that little how ill! Yet they are the best I can do. I endeavour to recollect all I have ever observed or thought upon a subject, and to express it as nearly as I can. Instead of writing on four subjects at a time, it is as much as I can manage to keep the thread of one discourse clear and unentangled. I have also time on my hands to correct my opinions, and polish my periods: but the one I cannot, and the other I will not do. I am fond of arguing: yet with a good deal of pains and practice it is often as much as I can do to beat my man; though he may be a very indifferent hand. A common fencer would disarm his adversary in the twinkling of an eye, unless he were a professor like himself. A stroke of wit will sometimes produce this effect, but there is no such power or superiority in sense or reasoning. There is no complete mastery of execution to be shown there: and you hardly know the professor

from the impudent pretender or the mere clown.

I have always had this feeling of the inefficacy and slow progress of intellectual compared to mechanical excellence, and it has always made me somewhat dissatisfied. It is a great many years since I saw Richer, the famous rope-dancer, perform at Sadler's Wells. He was matchless in his art, and added to his extraordinary skill exquisite ease, and unaffected natural grace. I was at that time employed in copying a half-length picture of Sir Joshua Reynolds's; and it put me out of conceit with it. How ill this part was made out in the drawing! How heavy, how slovenly this other was painted! I could not help saying to myself, "If the rope-dancer had performed his task in this manner, leaving so many gaps and botches in his work, he would have broke his neck long ago; I should never have seen that vigorous elasticity of nerve and precision of movement!"—Is it then so easy an undertaking (comparatively) to dance on a tight-rope? Let any one, who thinks so, get up and try. There is the thing. It is that which at first we cannot do at all, which in the end is done to such perfection. To account for this in some degree, I might observe that mechanical dexterity is confined to doing some one particular thing, which you can repeat as often as you please, in which you know whether you succeed or fail, and where the point of perfection consists in succeeding in a given undertaking.—In mechanical efforts, you improve by perpetual practice, and you do so infallibly, because the object to be attained is not a matter of taste or fancy or opinion, but of actual experiment, in which you must either do the thing or not do it. If a man is put to aim at a mark with a bow and arrow, he must hit it or miss it, that's certain. He cannot deceive himself, and go on shooting wide or falling short, and still fancy that he is making progress. The distinction between right and

wrong, between true and false, is here palpable; and he must either correct his aim or persevere in his error with his eyes open, for which there is neither excuse nor temptation. If a man is learning to dance on a rope, if he does not mind what he is about, he will break his neck. After that, it will be in vain for him to argue that he did not make a false step. His situation is not like that of Goldsmith's pedagogue.—

> In argument they own'd his wondrous skill,
> And e'en though vanquish'd, he could argue still.

Danger is a good teacher, and makes apt scholars. So are disgrace, defeat, exposure to immediate scorn and laughter. There is no opportunity in such cases for self-delusion, no idling time away, no being off your guard (or you must take the consequences)—neither is there any room for humour or caprice or prejudice. If the Indian Juggler were to play tricks in throwing up the three case-knives, which keep their positions like the leaves of a crocus in the air, he would cut his fingers. I can make a very bad antithesis without cutting my fingers. The tact of style is more ambiguous than that of double-edged instruments. If the Juggler were told that by flinging himself under the wheels of the Juggernaut, when the idol issues forth on a gaudy day, he would immediately be transported into Paradise, he might believe it, and nobody could disprove it. So the Brahmins may say what they please on that subject, may build up dogmas and mysteries without end, and not be detected: but their ingenious countryman cannot persuade the frequenters of the Olympic Theatre that he performs a number of astonishing feats without actually giving proofs of what he says.—There is then in this sort of manual dexterity, first a gradual aptitude acquired

to a given exertion of muscular power, from constant repetition, and in the next place, an exact knowledge how much is still wanting and necessary to be supplied. The obvious test is to increase the effort or nicety of the operation, and still to find it come true. The muscles ply instinctively to the dictates of habit. Certain movements and impressions of the hand and eye, having been repeated together an infinite number of times, are unconsciously but unavoidably cemented into closer and closer union; the limbs require little more than to be put in motion for them to follow a regular track with ease and certainty; so that the mere intention of the will acts mathematically, like touching the spring of a machine, and you come with Locksley in *Ivanhoe*, in shooting at a mark, " to allow for the wind."

Farther, what is meant by perfection in mechanical exercises is the performing certain feats to a uniform nicety, that is, in fact, undertaking no more than you can perform. You task yourself, the limit you fix is optional, and no more than human industry and skill can attain to: but you have no abstract, independent standard of difficulty or excellence (other than the extent of your own powers). Thus he who can keep up four brass balls does this *to perfection*; but he cannot keep up five at the same instant, and would fail every time he attempted it. That is, the mechanical performer undertakes to emulate himself, not to equal another. But the artist undertakes to imitate another, or to do what nature has done, and this it appears is more difficult, viz. to copy what she has set before us in the face of nature or " human face divine," entire and without a blemish, than to keep up four brass balls at the same instant; for the one is done by the power of human skill and industry, and the other never was nor will be. Upon the whole, therefore, I have more respect for Reynolds,

than I have for Richer; for, happen how it will, there have been more people in the world who could dance on a rope like the one than who could paint like Sir Joshua. The latter was but a bungler in his profession to the other, it is true; but then he had a harder task-master to obey, whose will was more wayward and obscure, and whose instructions it was more difficult to practise. You can put a child apprentice to a tumbler or rope-dancer with a comfortable prospect of success, if they are but sound of wind and limb: but you cannot do the same thing in painting. The odds are a million to one. You may make indeed as many H——s and H——s, as you put into that sort of machine, but not one Reynolds amongst them all, with his grace, his grandeur, his blandness of *gusto*, "in tones and gestures hit," unless you could make the man over again. To snatch this grace beyond the reach of art is then the height of art—where fine art begins, and where mechanical skill ends. The soft suffusion of the soul, the speechless breathing eloquence, the looks "commercing with the skies," the ever-shifting forms of an eternal principle, that which is seen but for a moment, but dwells in the heart always, and is only seized as it passes by strong and secret sympathy, must be taught by nature and genius, not by rules or study. It is suggested by feeling, not by laborious microscopic inspection: in seeking for it without, we lose the harmonious clue to it within: and in aiming to grasp the substance, we let the very spirit of art evaporate. In a word, the objects of fine art are not the objects of sight but as these last are the objects of taste and imagination, that is, as they appeal to the sense of beauty, of pleasure, and of power in the human breast, and are explained by that finer sense, and revealed in their inner structure to the eye in return. Nature is also a language. Objects, like words, have a meaning; and the true artist is the

interpreter of this language, which he can only do by knowing its application to a thousand other objects in a thousand other situations. Thus the eye is too blind a guide of itself to distinguish between the warm or cold tone of a deep blue sky, but another sense acts as a monitor to it, and does not err. The colour of the leaves in autumn would be nothing without the feeling that accompanies it; but it is that feeling that stamps them on the canvas, faded, seared, blighted, shrinking from the winter's flaw, and makes the sight as true as touch—

> And visions, as poetic eyes avow,
> Cling to each leaf and hang on every bough.

The more ethereal, evanescent, more refined and sublime part of art is the seeing nature through the medium of sentiment and passion, as each object is a symbol of the affections and a link in the chain of our endless being. But the unravelling this mysterious web of thought and feeling is alone in the Muse's gift, namely, in the power of that trembling sensibility which is awake to every change and every modification of its ever-varying impressions, that,

> Thrills in each nerve, and lives along the line.

This power is indifferently called genius, imagination, feeling, taste; but the manner in which it acts upon the mind can neither be defined by abstract rules, as is the case in science, nor verified by continual unvarying experiments as is the case in mechanical performances. The mechanical excellence of the Dutch painters in colouring and handling is that which comes the nearest in fine art to the perfection of certain manual exhibitions of skill. The truth of the effect and the facility with which it is produced are equally admirable. Up to a certain point,

every thing is faultless. The hand and eye have done their part. There is only a want of taste and genius. It is after we enter upon that enchanted ground that the human mind begins to droop and flag as in a strange road, or in a thick mist, benighted and making little way with many attempts and many failures, and that the best of us only escape with half a triumph. The undefined and the imaginary are the regions that we must pass like Satan, difficult and doubtful, "half flying, half on foot." The object in sense is a positive thing, and execution comes with practice.

Cleverness is a certain *knack* or aptitude at doing certain things, which depend more on a particular adroitness and off-hand readiness than on force or perseverance, such as making puns, making epigrams, making extempore verses, mimicking the company, mimicking a style, &c. Cleverness is either liveliness and smartness, or something answering to *sleight of hand*, like letting a glass fall sideways off a table, or else a trick, like knowing the secret spring of a watch. Accomplishments are certain external graces, which are to be learnt from others, and which are easily displayed to the admiration of the beholder, viz. dancing, riding, fencing, music, and so on. These ornamental acquirements are only proper to those who are at ease in mind and fortune. I know an individual who if he had been born to an estate of five thousand a year, would have been the most accomplished gentleman of the age. He would have been the delight and envy of the circle in which he moved—would have graced by his manners the liberality flowing from the openness of his heart, would have laughed with the women, have argued with the men, have said good things and written agreeable ones, have taken a hand at piquet or the lead at the harpsichord, and have set and sung his own verses—*nugæ canoræ*—

with tenderness and spirit; a Rochester without the vice, a modern Surrey! As it is, all these capabilities of excellence stand in his way. He is too versatile for a professional man, not dull enough for a political drudge, too gay to be happy, too thoughtless to be rich. He wants the enthusiasm of the poet, the severity of the prose-writer, and the application of the man of business.—Talent is the capacity of doing any thing that depends on application and industry, such as writing a criticism, making a speech, studying the law. Talent differs from genius, as voluntary differs from involuntary power. Ingenuity is genius in trifles, greatness is genius in undertakings of much pith and moment. A clever or ingenious man is one who can do any thing well, whether it is worth doing or not: a great man is one who can do that which when done is of the highest importance. Themistocles said he could not play on the flute, but that he could make of a small city a great one. This gives one a pretty good idea of the distinction in question.

Greatness is great power, producing great effects. It is not enough that a man has great power in himself, he must show it to all the world in a way that cannot be hid or gainsaid. He must fill up a certain idea in the public mind. I have no other notion of greatness than this two-fold definition, great results springing from great inherent energy. The great in visible objects has relation to that which extends over space: the great in mental ones has to do with space and time. No man is truly great, who is great only in his life-time. The test of greatness is the page of history. Nothing can be said to be great that has a distinct limit, or that borders on something evidently greater than itself. Besides, what is short-lived and pampered into mere notoriety, is of a gross and vulgar quality in itself. A Lord Mayor is

hardly a great man. A city orator or patriot of the day only show, by reaching the height of their wishes, the distance they are at from any true ambition. Popularity is neither fame nor greatness. A king (as such) is not a great man. He has great power, but it is not his own. He merely wields the lever of the state, which a child, an idiot, or a madman can do. It is the office, not the man we gaze at. Any one else in the same situation would be just as much an object of abject curiosity. We laugh at the country girl who having seen a king expressed her disappointment by saying, "Why, he is only a man!" Yet, knowing this, we run to see a king as if he was something more than a man.—To display the greatest powers, unless they are applied to great purposes, makes nothing for the character of greatness. To throw a barley-corn through the eye of a needle, to multiply nine figures by nine in the memory, argues infinite dexterity of body and capacity of mind, but nothing comes of either. There is a surprising power at work, but the effects are not proportionate, or such as take hold of the imagination. To impress the idea of power on others, they must be made in some way to feel it. It must be communicated to their understandings in the shape of an increase of knowledge, or it must subdue and overawe them by subjecting their wills. Admiration, to be solid and lasting, must be founded on proofs from which we have no means of escaping; it is neither a slight nor a voluntary gift. A mathematician who solves a profound problem, a poet who creates an image of beauty in the mind that was not there before, imparts knowledge and power to others, in which his greatness and his fame consists, and on which it reposes. Jedediah Buxton will be forgotten; but Napier's bones will live. Lawgivers, philosophers, founders of religion, conquerors and heroes, inventors and great geniuses in arts and

sciences, are great men; for they are great public benefactors, or formidable scourges to mankind. Among ourselves, Shakespeare, Newton, Bacon, Milton, Cromwell, were great men; for they showed great power by acts and thoughts, which have not yet been consigned to oblivion. They must needs be men of lofty stature, whose shadows lengthen out to remote posterity. A great farce-writer may be a great man; for Molière was but a great farce-writer. In my mind, the author of *Don Quixote* was a great man. So have there been many others. A great chess-player is not a great man, for he leaves the world as he found it. No act terminating in itself constitutes greatness. This will apply to all displays of power or trials of skill, which are confined to the momentary, individual effort, and construct no permanent image or trophy of themselves without them. Is not an actor then a great man, because "he dies and leaves the world no copy"? I must make an exception for Mrs. Siddons, or else give up my definition of greatness for her sake. A man at the top of his profession is not therefore a great man. He is great in his way, but that is all, unless he shows the marks of a great moving intellect, so that we trace the master-mind, and can sympathize with the springs that urge him on. The rest is but a craft or *mystery*. John Hunter was a great man—*that* any one might see without the smallest skill in surgery. His style and manner showed the man. He would set about cutting up the carcase of a whale with the same greatness of *gusto* that Michael Angelo would have hewn a block of marble. Lord Nelson was a great naval commander; but for myself, I have not much opinion of a sea-faring life. Sir Humphry Davy is a great chemist, but I am not sure that he is a great man. I am not a bit the wiser for any of his discoveries, nor I never met with any one that was. But it is in the nature

of greatness to propagate an idea of itself, as wave impels wave, circle without circle. It is a contradiction in terms for a coxcomb to be a great man. A really great man has always an idea of something greater than himself. I have observed that certain sectaries and polemical writers have no higher compliment to pay their most shining lights than to say that "Such a one was a considerable man in his day." Some new elucidation of a text sets aside the authority of the old interpretation, and a "great scholar's memory outlives him half a century," at the utmost. A rich man is not a great man, except to his dependants and his steward. A lord is a great man in the idea we have of his ancestry, and probably of himself, if we know nothing of him but his title. I have heard a story of two bishops, one of whom said (speaking of St. Peter's at Rome) that when he first entered it, he was rather awe-struck, but that as he walked up it, his mind seemed to swell and dilate with it, and at last to fill the whole building—the other said that as he saw more of it, he appeared to himself to grow less and less every step he took, and in the end to dwindle into nothing. This was in some respects a striking picture of a great and little mind—for greatness sympathizes with greatness, and littleness shrinks into itself. The one might have become a Wolsey; the other was only fit to become a Mendicant Friar—or there might have been court-reasons for making him a bishop. The French have to me a character of littleness in all about them; but they have produced three great men that belong to every country, Molière, Rabelais, and Montaigne.

To return from this digression, and conclude the Essay. A singular instance of manual dexterity was shown in the person of the late John Cavanagh, whom I have several times seen. His death was celebrated at the time in an article in the *Examiner* newspaper (Feb. 7,

1819), written apparently between jest and earnest: but as it is *pat* to our purpose, and falls in with my own way of considering such subjects, I shall here take leave to quote it.

"Died at his house in Burbage-street, St. Giles's, John Cavanagh, the famous hand fives-player. When a person dies, who does any one thing better than any one else in the world, which so many others are trying to do well, it leaves a gap in society. It is not likely that any one will now see the game of fives played in its perfection for many years to come—for Cavanagh is dead, and has not left his peer behind him. It may be said that there are things of more importance than striking a ball against a wall—there are things indeed which make more noise and do as little good, such as making war and peace, making speeches and answering them, making verses and blotting them; making money and throwing it away. But the game of fives is what no one despises who has ever played at it. It is the finest exercise for the body, and the best relaxation for the mind. The Roman poet said that 'Care mounted behind the horseman and stuck to his skirts.' But this remark would not have applied to the fives-player. He who takes to playing at fives is twice young. He feels neither the past nor future 'in the instant.' Debts, taxes, 'domestic treason, foreign levy, nothing can touch him further.' He has no other wish, no other thought, from the moment the game begins, but that of striking the ball, of placing it, of *making* it! This Cavanagh was sure to do. Whenever he touched the ball, there was an end of the chase. His eye was certain, his hand fatal, his presence of mind complete. He could do what he pleased, and he always knew exactly what to do. He saw the whole game, and played it; took instant advantage of his adversary's weakness, and recovered balls, as if by a miracle and from

sudden thought, that every one gave for lost. He had equal power and skill, quickness, and judgment. He could either out-wit his antagonist by finesse, or beat him by main strength. Sometimes, when he seemed preparing to send the ball with the full swing of his arm, he would by a slight turn of his wrist drop it within an inch of the line. In general, the ball came from his hand, as if from a racket, in a straight horizontal line; so that it was in vain to attempt to overtake or stop it. As it was said of a great orator that he never was at a loss for a word, and for the properest word, so Cavanagh always could tell the degree of force necessary to be given to a ball, and the precise direction in which it should be sent. He did his work with the greatest ease; never took more pains than was necessary; and while others were fagging themselves to death, was as cool and collected as if he had just entered the court. His style of play was as remarkable as his power of execution. He had no affectation, no trifling. He did not throw away the game to show off an attitude, or try an experiment. He was a fine, sensible, manly player, who did what he could, but that was more than any one else could even affect to do. His blows were not undecided and ineffectual—lumbering like Mr. Wordworth's epic poetry, nor wavering like Mr. Coleridge's lyric prose, nor short of the mark like Mr. Brougham's speeches, nor wide of it like Mr. Canning's wit, nor foul like the *Quarterly*, not *let* balls like the *Edinburgh Review*. Cobbett and Junius together would have made a Cavanagh. He was the best *up-hill* player in the world; even when his adversary was fourteen, he would play on the same or better, and as he never flung away the game through carelessness and conceit, he never gave it up through laziness or want of heart. The only peculiarity of his play was that he never *volleyed*, but let the balls hop; but if they rose an inch

from the ground, he never missed having them. There was not only nobody equal, but nobody second to him. It is supposed that he could give any other player half the game, or beat him with his left hand. His service was tremendous. He once played Woodward and Meredith together (two of the best players in England) in the Fives-court, St. Martin's-street, and made seven and twenty aces following by services alone—a thing unheard of. He another time played Peru, who was considered a first-rate fives-player, a match of the best out of five games, and in the three first games, which of course decided the match, Peru got only one ace. Cavanagh was an Irishman by birth, and a house-painter by profession. He had once laid aside his working-dress, and walked up, in his smartest clothes, to the Rosemary Branch to have an afternoon's pleasure. A person accosted him, and asked him if he would have a game. So they agreed to play for half a crown a game, and a bottle of cider. The first game began—it was seven, eight, ten, thirteen, fourteen, all. Cavanagh won it. The next was the same. They played on, and each game was hardly contested. 'There,' said the unconscious fives-player, 'there was a stroke that Cavanagh could not take: I never played better in my life, and yet I can't win a game. I don't know how it is.' However, they played on, Cavanagh winning every game, and the by-standers drinking the cider, and laughing all the time. In the twelfth game, when Cavanagh was only four, and the stranger thirteen, a person came in, and said, 'What! are you here, Cavanagh?' The words were no sooner pronounced than the astonished player let the ball drop from his hand, and saying, 'What! have I been breaking my heart all this time to beat Cavanagh?' refused to make another effort. 'And yet, I give you my word,' said Cavanagh, telling the story with some triumph, 'I

played all the while with my clenched fist.'—He used frequently to play matches at Copenhagen-house for wagers and dinners. The wall against which they play is the same that supports the kitchen-chimney, and when the wall resounded louder than usual, the cooks exclaimed, 'Those are the Irishman's balls,' and the joints trembled on the spit!—Goldsmith consoled himself that there were places where he too was admired: and Cavanagh was the admiration of all the fives-courts, where he ever played. Mr. Powell, when he played matches in the Court in St. Martin's-street, used to fill his gallery at half a crown a head, with amateurs and admirers of talent in whatever department it is shown. He could not have shown himself in any ground in England, but he would have been immediately surrounded with inquisitive gazers, trying to find out in what part of his frame his unrivalled skill lay, as politicians wonder to see the balance of Europe suspended in Lord Castlereagh's face, and admire the trophies of the British Navy lurking under Mr. Croker's hanging brow. Now Cavanagh was as good-looking a man as the Noble Lord, and much better looking than the Right Hon. Secretary. He had a clear open countenance, and did not look sideways or down, like Mr. Murray the bookseller. He was a young fellow of sense, humour, and courage. He once had a quarrel with a waterman at Hungerford-stairs, and, they say, served him out in great style. In a word, there are hundreds at this day, who cannot mention his name without admiration, as the best fives-player that perhaps ever lived (the greatest excellence of which they have any notion)—and the noisy shout of the ring happily stood him in stead of the unheard voice of posterity!—The only person who seems to have excelled as much in another way as Cavanagh did in his, was the late John Davies, the

racket-player. It was remarked of him that he did not seem to follow the ball, but the ball seemed to follow him. Give him a foot of wall, and he was sure to make the ball. The four best racket-players of that day were Jack Spines, Jem Harding, Armitage, and Church. Davies could give any one of these two hands a time, that is, half a game, and each of these, at their best, could give the best player now in London the same odds. Such are the gradations in all exertions of human skill and art. He once played four capital players together, and beat them. He was also a first-rate tennis-player, and an excellent fives-player. In the Fleet or King's Bench, he would have stood against Powell, who was reckoned the best open-ground player of his time. This last-mentioned player is at present the keeper of the Fives-court, and we might recommend to him for a motto over his door—'Who enters here, forgets himself, his country, and his friends.' And the best of it is, that by the calculation of the odds, none of the three are worth remembering!—Cavanagh died from the bursting of a blood-vessel, which prevented him from playing for the last two or three years. This, he was often heard to say, he thought hard upon him. He was fast recovering, however, when he was suddenly carried off, to the regret of all who knew him. As Mr. Peel made it a qualification of the present Speaker, Mr. Manners Sutton, that he was an excellent moral character, so Jack Cavanagh was a zealous Catholic, and could not be persuaded to eat meat on a Friday, the day on which he died. We have paid this willing tribute to his memory.

> Let no rude hand deface it,
> And his forlorn '*Hic Jacet.*'"

WILLIAM HAZLITT—*Table Talk or Original Essays.*

ELIA AND GEOFFREY CRAYON

So Mr. Charles Lamb and Mr. Washington Irving choose to designate themselves; and as their lucubrations under one or other of these *noms de guerre* have gained considerable notice from the public, we shall here attempt to discriminate their several styles and manner, and to point out the beauties and defects of each in treating of somewhat similar subjects.

Mr. Irving is, we take it, the more popular writer of the two, or a more general favourite: Mr. Lamb has more devoted, and perhaps more judicious partisans. Mr. Irving is by birth an American, and has, as it were, *skimmed the cream*, and taken off patterns with great skill and cleverness, from our best-known and happiest writers, so that their thoughts and almost their reputation are indirectly transferred to his page, and smile upon us from another hemisphere, like "the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow." He succeeds to our admiration and our sympathy by a sort of prescriptive title and traditional privilege. Mr. Lamb, on the contrary, being "native to the manner here," though he too has borrowed from previous sources, instead of availing himself of the most popular and admired, has groped out his way, and made his most successful researches among the more obscure and intricate, though certainly not the least pithy or pleasant of our writers. Mr. Washington Irving has culled and transplanted the flowers of modern literature for the amusement of the general reader: Mr. Lamb has raked among the dust and cobwebs of a more remote period, has exhibited specimens of curious relics,

and pored over moth-eaten, decayed manuscripts for the benefit of the more inquisitive and discerning part of the public. Antiquity after a time has the grace of novelty, as old fashions revived are mistaken for new ones; and a certain quaintness and singularity of style is an agreeable relief to the smooth and insipid monotony of modern composition.

Mr. Lamb has succeeded, not by conforming to the *Spirit of the Age*, but in opposition to it. He does not march boldly along with the crowd, but steals off the pavement to pick his way in the contrary direction. He prefers *bye-ways* to *highways*. When the full tide of human life pours along to some festive show, to some pageant of a day, Elia would stand on one side to look over an old book-stall, or stroll down some deserted pathway in search of a pensive description over a tottering doorway, or some quaint device in architecture, illustrative of embryo art and ancient manners. Mr. Lamb has the very soul of an antiquarian, as this implies a reflecting humanity; the film of the past hovers for ever before him. He is shy, sensitive, the reverse of everything coarse, vulgar, obtrusive, and *commonplace*. He would fain "shuffle off this mortal coil"; and his spirit clothes itself in the garb of elder time, homelier, but more durable. He is borne along with no pompous paradoxes, shines in no glittering tinsel of a fashionable phraseology, is neither fop nor sophist. He has none of the turbulence or froth of new-fangled opinions. His style runs pure and clear, though it may often take an underground course, or be conveyed through old-fashioned conduit-pipes. Mr. Lamb does not court popularity, nor strut in gaudy plumes, but shrinks from every kind of ostentatious and obvious pretension into the retirement of his own mind.

The self-applauding bird, the peacock see:—
Mark what a sumptuous pharisee is he!
Meridian sun-beams tempt him to unfold
His radiant glories, azure, green, and gold:
He treads as if, some solemn music near,
His measured step were governed by his ear:
And seems to say—"Ye meaner fowl, give place,
I am all splendour, dignity, and grace!"
Not so the pheasant on his charms presumes,
Though he too has a glory in his plumes,
He, Christian-like, retreats with modest mien
To the close copse or far sequestered green,
And shines without desiring to be seen.

These lines well describe the modest and delicate beauties of Mr. Lamb's writings, contrasted with the lofty and vain-glorious pretensions of some of his contemporaries. This gentleman is not one of those who pay all their homage to the prevailing idol: he thinks that

New-born gauds are made and moulded of things past,

nor does he

Give to dust that is a little gilt
More laud than gilt o'er-dusted.

His convictions "do not in broad rumour lie," nor are they "set off to the world in the glistering foil" of fashion, but "live and breathe aloft in those pure eyes. and perfect judgment of all-seeing *time.*"

Mr. Lamb rather affects and is tenacious of the obscure and remote, of that which rests on its own intrinsic and silent merit; which scorns all alliance, or even the suspicion of owing anything to noisy clamour, to the glare of circumstances. There is a fine tone of

chiaro-scuro, a moral perspective in his writings. He delights to dwell on that which is fresh to the eye of memory; he yearns after and covets what soothes the frailty of human nature. That touches him most nearly which is withdrawn to a certain distance, which verges on the borders of oblivion: that piques and provokes his fancy most, which is hid from a superficial glance. That which, though gone by, is still remembered, is in his view more genuine, and has given more "vital signs that it will live," than a thing of yesterday, that may be forgotten to-morrow. Death has in this sense the spirit of life in it; and the shadowy has to our author something substantial in it. Ideas savour most of reality in his mind; or rather his imagination loiters on the edge of each, and a page of his writings recalls to our fancy the *stranger* on the grate, fluttering in its dusky tenuity, with its idle superstition and hospitable welcome!

Mr. Lamb has a distaste to new faces, to new books, to new buildings, to new customs. He is shy of all imposing appearances, of all assumptions of self-importance, of all adventitious ornaments, of all mechanical advantages, even to a nervous excess. It is not merely that he does not rely upon, or ordinarily avail himself of them; he holds them in abhorrence; he utterly abjures and discards them and places a great gulf between him and them. He disdains all the vulgar artifices of authorship, all the cant of criticism and helps to notoriety. He has no grand swelling theories to attract the visionary and the enthusiast, no passing topics to allure the thoughtless and the vain. He evades the present; he mocks the future. His affections revert to, and settle on the past; but then even this must have something personal and local in it to interest him deeply and thoroughly. He pitches his tent in the suburbs of existing manners; brings down the account of charac-

ter to the few straggling remains of the last generation; seldom ventures beyond the bills of mortality, and occupies that nice point between egotism and disinterested humanity. No one makes the tour of our southern metropolis, or describes the manners of the last age, so well as Mr. Lamb—with so fine and yet so formal an air—with such vivid obscurity, with such arch piquancy, such picturesque quaintness, such smiling pathos. How admirably he has sketched the former inmates of the South-Sea House; what "fine fretwork he makes of their double and single entries!" With what a firm, yet subtle pencil he has embodied *Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist*! How notably he embalms a battered *beau*; how delightfully an amour, that was cold forty years ago, revives in his pages! With what well-disguised humour he introduces us to his relations, and how freely he serves up his friends! Certainly, some of his portraits are *fixtures*, and will do to hang up as lasting and lively emblems of human infirmity. Then there is no one who has so sure an ear for "the chimes at midnight," not even excepting Mr. Justice Shallow; nor could Master Silence himself take his "cheese and pippins" with a more significant and satisfactory air. With what a gusto Mr. Lamb describes the Inns and Courts of law, the Temple and Gray's-Inn, as if he had been a student there for the last two hundred years, and had been as well acquainted with the person of Sir Francis Bacon as he is with his portrait or writings! It is hard to say whether St. John's Gate is connected with more intense and authentic associations in his mind, as a part of old London Wall, or as the frontispiece (time out of mind) of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. He haunts Watling-street like a gentle spirit; the avenues to the play-houses are thick with panting recollections; and Christ's-Hospital still breathes the balmy breath of infancy in

his description of it! Whittington and his Cat are a fine hallucination for Mr. Lamb's historic Muse, and we believe he never heartily forgave a certain writer who took the subject of Guy Faux out of his hands. The streets of London are his fairy-land, teeming with wonder, with life and interest to his retrospective glance, as it did to the eager eye of childhood; he has contrived to weave its tritest traditions into a bright and endless romance!

Mr. Lamb's taste in books is also fine, and it is peculiar. It is not the worse for a little *idiosyncrasy*. He does not go deep into the Scotch Novels; but he is at home in Smollett or Fielding. He is little read in Junius or Gibbon, but no man can give a better account of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, or Sir Thomas Brown's *Urn-Burial*, or Fuller's *Worthies*, or John Bunyan's *Holy War*. No one is more unimpressible to a specious declamation; no one relishes a recondite beauty more. His admiration of Shakespeare and Milton does not make him despise Pope; and he can read Parnell with patience, and Gay with delight. His taste in French and German literature is somewhat defective; nor has he made much progress in the science of Political Economy or other abstruse studies, though he has read vast folios of controversial divinity, merely for the sake of the intricacy of style, and to save himself the pain of thinking.

Mr. Lamb is a good judge of prints and pictures. His admiration of Hogarth does credit to both, particularly when it is considered that Leonardo da Vinci is his next greatest favourite, and that his love of the *actual* does not proceed from a want of taste for the *ideal*. His worst fault is an over-eagerness of enthusiasm, which occasionally makes him take a surfeit of his highest favourites. Mr. Lamb excels in familiar conversation almost as much as in writing, when his modesty does not over-

power his self-possession. He is as little of a proser as possible; but he *blurts* out the finest wit and sense in the world. He keeps a good deal in the background at first, till some excellent conceit pushes him forward, and then he abounds in whim and pleasantry. There is a primitive simplicity and self-denial about his manners, and a Quakerism in his personal appearance, which is, however, relieved by a fine Titian head, full of dumb eloquence!

Mr. Lamb is a general favourite with those who know him. His character is equally singular and amiable. He is endeared to his friends not less by his foibles than his virtues; he insures their esteem by the one, and does not wound their self-love by the other. He gains ground in the opinion of others by making no advances in his own. We easily admire genius where the diffidence of the possessor makes our acknowledgment of merit seem like a sort of patronage, or act of condescension, as we willingly extend our good offices where they are not exacted as obligations, or repaid with sullen indifference.

The style of the *Essays of Elia* is liable to the charge of a certain *mannerism*. His sentences are cast in the mould of old authors; his expressions are borrowed from them; but his feelings and observations are genuine and original, taken from actual life, or from his own breast; and he may be said (if any one can) "to have coined his heart for *jests*," and to have split his brain for fine distinctions! Mr. Lamb, from the peculiarity of his exterior and address as an author, would probably never have made his way by detached and independent efforts; but, fortunately for himself and others, he has taken advantage of the Periodical Press, where he has been stuck into notice; and the texture of his compositions is assuredly fine enough to bear the broadest glare of popularity that has hitherto shone upon them. Mr. Lamb's literary

efforts have procured him civic honours (a thing unheard of in our times), and he has been invited, in his character of Elia, to dine at a select party with the Lord Mayor. We should prefer this distinction to that of being poet-laureate. We would recommend to Mr. Waithman's perusal (if Mr. Lamb has not anticipated us) the *Rosamund Gray* and the *John Woodvil* of the same author, as an agreeable relief to the noise of a City feast and the heat of City elections.

A friend, a short time ago, quoted some lines[1] from the last-mentioned of these works, which meeting Mr. Godwin's eye, he was so struck with the beauty of the passage, and with a consciousness of having seen it before, that he was uneasy till he could recollect where, and after hunting in vain for it in Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and other not unlikely places, sent to Mr. Lamb to know if he could help him to the author!

Mr. Washington Irving's acquaintance with English literature begins almost where Mr. Lamb's ends—with the *Spectator*, Tom Brown's works and the wits of Queen Anne. He is not bottomed in our elder writers, nor do we think he has tasked his own faculties much, at least on English ground. Of the merit of his *Knickerbocker* and New York stories we cannot pretend to judge. But in his *Sketch-book* and *Bracebridge-Hall* he gives us very good American copies of our British Essayists and Novelists, which may be very well on the other side of the water, or as proofs of the capabilities of the national genius, but which might be dispensed with here, where we have to boast of the originals. Not only Mr. Irving's language is with great taste and felicity modelled on that of Addison, Goldsmith, Sterne, or Mackenzie: but the

[1] The description of sports in the forest:
"To see the sun to bed and to arise,
Like some hot amourist with glowing eyes," etc.

thoughts and sentiments are taken at the rebound, and, as they are brought forward at the present period, want both freshness and probability.

Mr. Irving's writings are literary *anachronisms*. He comes to England for the first time, and being on the spot, fancies himself in the midst of those characters and manners which he had read of in the *Spectator* and other approved authors, and which were the only idea he had hitherto formed of the parent country. Instead of looking round to see what *we are*, he sets to work to describe us as *we were*—at second hand. He has Parson Adams or Sir Roger de Coverley in his "*mind's eye*"; and he makes a village curate, or a country 'squire in Yorkshire or Hampshire sit to these admired models for their portraits in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Whatever the ingenious writer has been most delighted with in the representations of books, he transfers to his port-folio, and swears that he has found it actually existing in the course of his observation and travels through Great Britain. Instead of tracing the changes that have taken place in society since Addison or Fielding wrote, he transcribes their account in a different handwriting, and thus keeps us stationary, at least in our most attractive and praise-worthy qualities of simplicity, honesty, hospitality, modesty, and good-nature. This is a very flattering mode of turning fiction into history, or history into fiction; and we should scarcely know ourselves again in the softened and altered likeness, but that it bears the date of 1820, and issues from the press in Albemarle-street. This is one way of complimenting our national and Tory prejudices, and, coupled with literal or exaggerated portraits of *Yankee* peculiarities, could hardly fail to please. The first Essay in the *Sketch-book*, that on National Antipathies, is the best; but, after that, the sterling ore of wit or feeling is gradually spun

thinner and thinner, till it fades to the shadow of a shade. Mr. Irving is himself, we believe, a most agreeable and deserving man, and has been led into the natural and pardonable error we speak of by the tempting bait of European popularity, in which he thought there was no more likely method of succeeding than by imitating the style of our standard authors, and giving us credit for the virtues of our forefathers.

WILLIAM HAZLITT—*The Spirit of the Age.*

THE PRAISE OF CHIMNEY-SWEEPERS

I LIKE to meet a sweep—understand me—not a grown sweeper—old chimney-sweepers are by no means attractive—but one of those tender novices, blooming through their first nigritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek—such as come forth with the dawn, or somewhat earlier, with their little professional notes sounding like the *peep peep* of a young sparrow; or liker to the matin lark should I pronounce them, in their aerial ascents not seldom anticipating the sun-rise?

I have a kindly yearning toward these dim specks—poor blots—innocent blacknesses—

I reverence these young Africans of our own growth—these almost clergy imps, who sport their cloth without assumption; and from their little pulpits (the tops of chimneys), in the nipping air of a December morning, preach a lesson of patience to mankind.

When a child, what a mysterious pleasure it was to witness their operation! to see a chit no bigger than one's self enter, one knew not by what process, into what seemed the *fauces Averni*—to pursue him in imagination, as he went sounding on through so many dark stifling caverns, horrid shades!—to shudder with the idea that "now, surely, he must be lost for ever!"—to revive at hearing his feeble shout of discovered daylight—and then (O fulness of delight) running out of doors, to come just in time to see the sable phenomenon emerge in safety, the brandished weapon of his art victorious like some flag waved over a conquered citadel! I seem to remember having been told, that a bad sweep was

once left in a stack with his brush, to indicate which way the wind blew. It was an awful spectacle certainly; not much unlike the old stage direction in Macbeth, where the "Apparition of a child crowned with a tree in his hand rises."

Reader, if thou meetest one of these small gentry in thy early rambles, it is good to give him a penny. It is better to give him two-pence. If it be starving weather, and to the proper troubles of his hard occupation, a pair of kibed heels (no unusual accompaniment) be superadded, the demand on thy humanity will surely rise to a tester.

There is a composition, the ground-work of which I have understood to be the sweet wood 'yclept sassafras. This wood boiled down to a kind of tea, and tempered with an infusion of milk and sugar, hath to some tastes a delicacy beyond the China luxury. I know not how thy palate may relish it; for myself, with every deference to the judicious Mr. Read, who hath time out of mind kept open a shop (the only one he avers in London) for the vending of this "wholesome and pleasant beverage," on the south side of Fleet Street, as thou approachest Bridge Street—*the only Salopian house*—I have never yet ventured to dip my own particular lip in a basin of his commended ingredients—a cautious premonition to the olfactories constantly whispering to me, that my stomach must infallibly, with all due courtesy, decline it. Yet I have seen palates, otherwise not uninstructed in dietetical elegances, sup it up with avidity.

I know not by what particular conformation of the organ it happens, but I have always found that this composition is surprisingly gratifying to the palate of a young chimney-sweeper—whether the oily particles (sassafras is slightly oleaginous) do attenuate and soften the fuliginous concretions, which are sometimes found

(in dissections) to adhere to the roof of the mouth in these unfledged practitioners; or whether Nature, sensible that she had mingled too much of bitter wood in the lot of these raw victims, caused to grow out of the earth her sassafras for a sweet lenitive—but so it is, that no possible taste or odour to the senses of a young chimney-sweeper can convey a delicate excitement comparable to this mixture. Being penniless, they will yet hang their black heads over the ascending steam, to gratify one sense if possible, seemingly no less pleased than those domestic animals—cats—when they purr over a new-found sprig of valerian. There is something more in these sympathies than philosophy can inculcate.

Now albeit Mr. Read boasteth, not without reason, that his is the *only Salopian house*; yet be it known to thee, reader—if thou art one who keepest what are called good hours, thou art haply ignorant of the fact—he hath a race of industrious imitators, who from stalls, and under open sky, dispense the same savoury mess to humbler customers, at that dead time of the dawn, when (as extremes meet) the rake, reeling home from his midnight cups, and the hard-handed artisan leaving his bed to resume the premature labours of the day, jostle, not unfrequently to the manifest disconcerting of the former, for the honours of the pavement. It is the time when, in summer, between the expired and the not yet relumined kitchen-fires, the kennels of our fair metropolis give forth their least satisfactory odours. The rake, who wisheth to dissipate his o'er-night vapours in more grateful coffee, curses the ungenial fume, as he passeth; but the artisan stops to taste, and blesses the fragrant breakfast.

This is *Saloop*—the precocious herb-woman's darling —the delight of the early gardener, who transports his smoking cabbages by break of day from Hammersmith

to Covent Garden's famed piazzas—the delight, and, oh, I fear, too often the envy, of the unpennied sweep. Him shouldest thou haply encounter, with his dim visage pendent over the grateful steam, regale him with a sumptuous basin (it will cost thee but three halfpennies) and a slice of delicate bread and butter (an added halfpenny)—so may thy culinary fires, eased of the o'ercharged secretions from thy worse-placed hospitalities, curl up a lighter volume to the welkin—so may the descending soot never taint thy costly well-ingredienced soups—nor the odious cry, quick-reaching from street to street, of the *fired chimney*, invite the rattling engines from ten adjacent parishes, to disturb for a casual scintillation thy peace and pocket!

I am by nature extremely susceptible of street affronts; the jeers and taunts of the populace; the low-bred triumph they display over the casual trip, or splashed stocking, of a gentleman. Yet can I endure the jocularity of a young sweep with something more than forgiveness.—In the last winter but one, pacing along Cheapside with my accustomed precipitation when I walk westward, a treacherous slide brought me upon my back in an instant. I scrambled up with pain and shame enough—yet outwardly trying to face it down, as if nothing had happened—when the roguish grin of one of these young wits encountered me. There he stood, pointing me out with his dusky finger to the mob, and to a poor woman (I suppose his mother) in particular, till the tears for the exquisiteness of the fun (so he thought it) worked themselves out at the corners of his poor red eyes, red from many a previous weeping, and soot-inflamed, yet twinkling through all with such a joy, snatched out of desolation, that Hogarth—but Hogarth has got him already (how could he miss him?) in the March of Finchley, grinning at the pie-man—there he stood, as he stands

in the picture, irremovable, as if the jest was to last for ever—with such a maximum of glee, and minimum of mischief, in his mirth—for the grin of a genuine sweep hath absolutely no malice in it—that I could have been content, if the honour of a gentleman might endure it, to have remained his butt and his mockery till midnight.

I am by theory obdurate to the seductiveness of what are called a fine set of teeth. Every pair of rosy lips (the ladies must pardon me) is a casket, presumably holding such jewels; but, methinks, they should take leave to "air" them as frugally as possible. The fine lady, or fine gentleman, who show me their teeth, show me bones. Yet must I confess, that from the mouth of a true sweep a display (even to ostentation) of those white and shining ossifications, strikes me as an agreeable anomaly in manners, and an allowable piece of foppery. It is, as when

> A sable cloud
> Turns forth her silver lining on the night.

It is like some remnant of gentry not quite extinct; a badge of better days; a hint of nobility:—and, doubtless, under the obscuring darkness and double night of their forlorn disguisement, oftentimes lurketh good blood, and gentle conditions, derived from lost ancestry, and a lapsed pedigree. The premature apprenticements of these tender victims give but too much encouragement, I fear, to clandestine, and almost infantile abductions: the seeds of civility and true courtesy, so often discernible in these young grafts (not otherwise to be accounted for), plainly hint at some forced adoptions; many noble Rachels mourning for their children, even in our days, countenance the fact; the tales of fairy-spiriting may shadow a lamentable verity, and the recovery of the young Montagu be but a solitary instance of good for-

tune, out of many irreparable and hopeless *defiliations*.

In one of the state beds at Arundel Castle, a few years since—under a ducal canopy—(that seat of the Howards is an object of curiosity to visitors, chiefly for its beds, in which the late duke was especially a connoisseur)—encircled with curtains of delicatest crimson, with starry coronets inwoven—folded between a pair of sheets whiter and softer than the lap where Venus lulled Ascanius—was discovered by chance, after all methods of search had failed, at noon-day, fast asleep, a lost chimney-sweeper. The little creature, having somehow confounded his passage among the intricacies of those lordly chimneys, by some unknown aperture had alighted upon this magnificent chamber; and, tired with his tedious explorations, was unable to resist the delicious invitement to repose, which he there saw exhibited; so, creeping between the sheets very quietly, laid his black head upon the pillow, and slept like a young Howard.

Such is the account given to the visitors at the Castle. —But I cannot help seeming to perceive a confirmation of what I have just hinted at in this story. A high instinct was at work in the case, or I am mistaken. Is it probable that a poor child of that description, with whatever weariness he might be visited, would have ventured, under such a penalty, as he would be taught to expect, to uncover the sheets of a Duke's bed, and deliberately to lay himself down between them, when the rug, or the carpet, presented an obvious couch, still far above his pretensions—is this probable, I would ask, if the great power of nature, which I contend for, had not been manifested within him, prompting to the adventure? Doubtless this young nobleman (for such my mind misgives me that he must be) was allured by some memory, not amounting to full consciousness, of his condition in

infancy, when he was used to be lapt by his mother, or his nurse, in just such sheets as he there found, into which he was but now creeping back as into his proper *incunabula*, and resting-place.—By no other theory, than by this sentiment of a pre-existent state (as I may call it), can I explain a deed so venturous, and, indeed, upon any other system, so indecorous, in this tender, but unseasonable, sleeper.

My pleasant friend JEM WHITE was so impressed with a belief of metamorphoses like this frequently taking place, that in some sort to reverse the wrongs of fortune in these poor changelings, he instituted an annual feast of chimney-sweepers, at which it was his pleasure to officiate as host and waiter. It was a solemn supper held in Smithfield, upon the yearly return of the fair of St. Bartholomew. Cards were issued a week before to the master-sweeps in and about the metropolis, confining the invitation to their younger fry. Now and then an elderly stripling would get in among us, and be good-naturedly winked at; but our main body were infantry. One unfortunate wight, indeed, who relying upon his dusky suit, had intruded himself into our party, but by tokens was providentially discovered in time to be no chimney-sweeper (all is not soot which looks so), was quoited out of the presence with universal indignation, as not having on the wedding garment; but in general the greatest harmony prevailed. The place chosen was a convenient spot among the pens, at the north side of the fair, not so far distant as to be impervious to the agreeable hubbub of that vanity; but remote enough not to be obvious to the interruption of every gaping spectator in it. The guests assembled about seven. In those little temporary parlours three tables were spread with napery, not so fine as substantial, and at every board a comely hostess presided with her pan of hissing sausages. The nostrils

of the young rogues dilated at the savour. JAMES WHITE, as head waiter, had charge of the first table; and myself, with our trusty companion[1] BIGOD, ordinarily ministered to the other two. There was clambering and jostling, you may be sure, who should get at the first table—for Rochester in his maddest days could not have done the humours of the scene with more spirit than my friend. After some general expression of thanks for the honour the company had done him, his inaugural ceremony was to clasp the greasy waist of old dame Ursula (the fattest of the three), that stood frying and fretting, half-blessing, half-cursing "the gentleman," and imprint upon her chaste lips a tender salute, whereat the universal host would set up a shout that tore the concave, while hundreds of grinning teeth startled the night with their brightness. O it was a pleasure to see the sable younkers lick in the unctuous meat, with *his* more unctuous sayings—how he would fit the tit-bits to the puny mouths, reserving the lengthier links for the seniors—how he would intercept a morsel even in the jaws of some young desperado, declaring it "must to the pan again to be browned, for it was not fit for a gentleman's eating"—how he would recommend this slice of white bread, or that piece of kissing-crust, to a tender juvenile, advising them all to have a care of cracking their teeth, which were their best patrimony—how genteelly he would deal about the small ale, as if it were wine, naming the brewer, and protesting, if it were not good he should lose their custom; with a special recommendation to wipe the lip before drinking. Then we had our toasts—"The King"—the "Cloth"—which, whether they understood or not, was equally diverting and flattering;—and for a crowning sentiment, which never failed, "May the Brush supersede the Laurel."

[1] John Fenwick.

All these, and fifty other fancies, which were rather felt than comprehended by his guests, would he utter, standing upon tables, and prefacing every sentiment with a "Gentlemen, give me leave to propose so and so," which was a prodigious comfort to those young orphans; every now and then stuffing into his mouth (for it did not do to be squeamish on these occasions) indiscriminate pieces of those reeking sausages, which pleased them mightily, and was the savouriest part, you may believe, of the entertainment.

Golden lads and lasses must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust—

James White is extinct, and with him these suppers have long ceased. He carried away with him half the fun of the world when he died—of my world at least. His old clients look for him among the pens; and, missing him, reproach the altered feast of St. Bartholomew, and the glory of Smithfield departed for ever.

CHARLES LAMB—*The Essays of Elia.*

MACKERY END, IN HERTFORDSHIRE

Bridget Elia has been my housekeeper for many a long year. I have obligations to Bridget, extending beyond the period of memory. We house together, old bachelor and maid, in a sort of double singleness; with such tolerable comfort, upon the whole, that I, for one, find in myself no sort of disposition to go out upon the mountains, with the rash king's offspring, to bewail my celibacy. We agree pretty well in our tastes and habits—yet so, as "with a difference." We are generally in harmony, with occasional bickerings—as it should be among near relations. Our sympathies are rather understood, than expressed; and once, upon my dissembling a tone in my voice more kind than ordinary, my cousin burst into tears, and complained that I was altered. We are both great readers in different directions. While I am hanging over (for the thousandth time) some passage in old Burton, or one of his strange contemporaries, she is abstracted in some modern tale, or adventure, whereof our common reading-table is daily fed with assiduously fresh supplies. Narrative teases me. I have little concern in the progress of events. She must have a story—well, ill, or indifferently told—so there be life stirring in it, and plenty of good or evil accidents. The fluctuations of fortune in fiction—and almost in real life—have ceased to interest, or operate but dully upon me. Out-of-the-way humours and opinions—heads with some diverting twist in them—the oddities of authorship, please me most. My cousin has a native disrelish of any thing that sounds odd or bizarre. Nothing goes down

with her, that is quaint, irregular, or out of the road of common sympathy. She "holds Nature more clever." I can pardon her blindness to the beautiful obliquities of the *Religio Medici*; but she must apologize to me for certain disrespectful insinuations, which she has been pleased to throw out latterly, touching the intellectuals of a dear favourite of mine, of the last century but one—the thrice noble, chaste, and virtuous—but again somewhat fantastical, and original-brain'd, generous Margaret Newcastle.

It has been the lot of my cousin, oftener perhaps than I could have wished, to have had for her associates and mine, free-thinkers—leaders, and disciples, of novel philosophies and systems; but she neither wrangles with, nor accepts, their opinions. That which was good and venerable to her, when a child, retains its authority over her mind still. She never juggles or plays tricks with her understanding.

We are both of us inclined to be a little too positive; and I have observed the result of our disputes to be almost uniformly this—that in matters of fact, dates, and circumstances, it turns out, that I was in the right, and my cousin in the wrong. But where we have differed upon moral points; upon something proper to be done, or let alone; whatever heat of opposition, or steadiness of conviction, I set out with, I am sure always, in the long run, to be brought over to her way of thinking.

I must touch upon the foibles of my kinswoman with a gentle hand, for Bridget does not like to be told of her faults. She hath an awkward trick (to say no worse of it) of reading in company: at which times she will answer *yes* or *no* to a question without fully understanding its purport—which is provoking, and derogatory in the highest degree to the dignity of the putter of the said question. Her presence of mind is equal to the most

pressing trials of life, but will sometimes desert her upon trifling occasions. When the purpose requires it, and is a thing of moment, she can speak to it greatly; but in matters which are not stuff of the conscience, she hath been known sometimes to let slip a word less seasonably.

Her education in youth was not much attended to; and she happily missed all that train of female garniture, which passeth by the name of accomplishments. She was tumbled early, by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading, without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage. Had I twenty girls, they should be brought up exactly in this fashion. I know not whether their chance in wedlock might not be diminished by it; but I can answer for it, that it makes (if the worst come to the worst) most incomparable old maids.

In a season of distress, she is the truest comforter; but in the teasing accidents, and minor perplexities, which do call out the *will* to meet them, she sometimes maketh matters worse by an excess of participation. If she does not always divide your trouble, upon the pleasanter occasions of life she is sure always to treble your satisfaction. She is excellent to be at a play with, or upon a visit; but best, when she goes a journey with you.

We made an excursion together a few summers since, into Hertfordshire, to beat up the quarters of some of our less-known relations in that fine corn country.

The oldest thing I remember is Mackery End; or Mackarel End, as it is spelt, perhaps more properly, in some old maps of Hertfordshire; a farm-house—delightfully situated within a gentle walk from Wheathampstead. I can just remember having been there, on a visit to a great-aunt, when I was a child, under the care of Bridget; who, as I have said, is older than myself by

some ten years. I wish that I could throw into a heap the remainder of our joint existences, that we might share them in equal division. But that is impossible. The house was at that time in the occupation of a substantial yeoman, who had married my grandmother's sister. His name was Gladman. My grandmother was a Bruton, married to a Field. The Gladmans and the Brutons are still flourishing in that part of the county, but the Fields are almost extinct. More than forty years had elapsed since the visit I speak of; and for the greater portion of that period, we had lost sight of the other two branches also. Who or what sort of persons inherited Mackery End—kindred or strange folk—we were afraid almost to conjecture, but determined some day to explore.

By somewhat a circuitous route, taking the noble park at Luton in our way from St. Albans, we arrived at the spot of our anxious curiosity about noon. The sight of the old farm-house, though every trace of it was effaced from my recollections, affected me with a pleasure which I had not experienced for many a year. For though *I* had forgotten it, *we* had never forgotten being there together, and we had been talking about Mackery End all our lives, till memory on my part became mocked with a phantom of itself, and I thought I knew the aspect of a place, which, when present, O how unlike it was to *that*, which I had conjured up so many times instead of it!

Still the air breathed balmily about it; the season was in the "heart of June," and I could say with the poet,

> But thou, that didst appear so fair
>   To fond imagination,
> Dost rival in the light of day
>   Her delicate creation!

Bridget's was more a waking bliss than mine, for she easily remembered her old acquaintance again—some altered features, of course, a little grudged at. At first, indeed, she was ready to disbelieve for joy; but the scene soon re-confirmed itself in her affections—and she traversed every out-post of the old mansion, to the woodhouse, the orchard, the place where the pigeon-house had stood (house and birds were alike flown) with a breathless impatience of recognition, which was more pardonable perhaps than decorous at the age of fifty odd. But Bridget in some things is behind her years.

The only thing left was to get into the house—and that was a difficulty which to me singly would have been insurmountable; for I am terribly shy in making myself known to strangers and out-of-date kinsfolk. Love, stronger than scruple, winged my cousin in without me; but she soon returned with a creature that might have sat to a sculptor for the image of Welcome. It was the youngest of the Gladmans; who, by marriage with a Bruton, had become mistress of the old mansion. A comely brood are the Brutons. Six of them, females, were noted as the handsomest young women in the county. But this adopted Bruton, in my mind, was better than they all—more comely. She was born too late to have remembered me. She just recollected in early life to have had their cousin Bridget once pointed out to her, climbing a stile. But the name of kindred, and of cousinship, was enough. Those slender ties, that prove slight as gossamer in the rending atmosphere of a metropolis, bind faster, as we found it, in hearty, homely, loving Hertfordshire. In five minutes we were as thoroughly acquainted as if we had been born and bred up together; were familiar, even to the calling each other by our Christian names. So Christians should call one another. To have seen Bridget, and her—it was like

the meeting of the two scriptural cousins! There was a grace and dignity, an amplitude of form and stature, answering to her mind, in this farmer's wife, which would have shined in a palace—or so we thought it. We were made welcome by husband and wife equally—we, and our friend that was with us.—I had almost forgotten him—but B.F.[1] will not so soon forget that meeting, if peradventure he shall read this on the far distant shores where the Kangaroo haunts. The fatted calf was made ready, or rather was already so, as if in anticipation of our coming; and, after an appropriate glass of native wine, never let me forget with what honest pride this hospitable cousin made us proceed to Wheathampstead, to introduce us (as some new-found rarity) to her mother and sister Gladmans, who did indeed know something more of us, at a time when she almost knew nothing.—With what corresponding kindness we were received by them also—how Bridget's memory, exalted by the occasion, warmed into a thousand half-obliterated recollections of things and persons, to my utter astonishment, and her own—and to the astoundment of B.F. who sat by, almost the only thing that was not a cousin there—old effaced images of more than half-forgotten names and circumstances still crowding back upon her, as words written in lemon come out upon exposure to a friendly warmth—when I forget all this, then may my country cousins forget me; and Bridget no more remember, that in the days of weakling infancy I was her tender charge—as I have been her care in foolish manhood since—in those pretty pastoral walks, long ago, about Mackery End, in Hertfordshire.

CHARLES LAMB—*The Essays of Elia.*

[1] Barron Field.

DETACHED THOUGHTS ON BOOKS AND READING

> To mind the inside of a book is to entertain one's self with the forced product of another man's brain. Now I think a man of quality and breeding may be much amused with the natural sprouts of his own.
>
> *Lord Foppington in "The Relapse."*

AN ingenious acquaintance of my own was so much struck with this bright sally of his Lordship, that he has left off reading altogether, to the great improvement of his originality. At the hazard of losing some credit on this head, I must confess that I dedicate no inconsiderable portion of my time to other people's thoughts. I dream away my life in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in other men's minds. When I am not walking, I am reading; I cannot sit and think. Books think for me.

I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild too low. I can read anything which I call a *book*. There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such.

In this catalogue of *books which are no books—biblia a-biblia*—I reckon Court Calendars, Directories, Pocket Books, Draught Boards, bound and lettered on the back, Scientific Treatises, Almanacks, Statutes at Large; the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and, generally, all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be without": the Histories of Flavius Josephus (that learned Jew), and Paley's *Moral Philosophy*. With these exceptions, I can read almost anything. I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so unexcluding.

I confess that it moves my spleen to see these *things in books' clothing* perched upon shelves, like false saints, usurpers of true shrines, intruders into the sanctuary, thrusting out the legitimate occupants. To reach down a well-bound semblance of a volume, and hope it some kind-hearted play-book, then, opening what "seem its leaves," to come bolt upon a withering Population Essay. To expect a Steele, or a Farquhar, and find—Adam Smith. To view a well-arranged assortment of block-headed Encyclopædias (Anglicanas or Metropolitanas) set out in an array of Russia, or Morocco, when a tithe of that good leather would comfortably re-clothe my shivering folios; would renovate Paracelsus himself, and enable old Raymund Lully to look like himself again in the world. I never see these impostors, but I long to strip them, to warm my ragged veterans in their spoils.

To be strong-backed and neat-bound is the desideratum of a volume. Magnificence comes after. This, when it can be afforded, is not to be lavished upon all kinds of books indiscriminately. I would not dress a set of Magazines, for instance, in full suit. The dishabille, or half-binding (with Russia backs ever) is *our* costume. A Shakespeare, or a Milton (unless the first editions), it were mere foppery to trick out in gay apparel. The possession of them confers no distinction. The exterior of them (the things themselves being so common), strange to say, raises no sweet emotions, no tickling sense of property in the owner. Thomson's *Seasons*, again, looks best (I maintain it) a little torn, and dog's-eared. How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves, and worn-out appearance, nay, the very odour (beyond Russia), if we would not forget kind feelings in fastidiousness, of an old "Circulating Library" *Tom Jones*, or *Vicar of Wakefield*! How they

speak of the thousand thumbs, that have turned over their pages with delight!—of the lone sempstress, whom they may have cheered (milliner, or hard-working mantua-maker) after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill-spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents! Who would have them a whit less soiled? What better condition could we desire to see them in?

In some respects the better a book is, the less it demands from binding. Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and all that class of perpetually self-reproductive volumes—Great Nature's Stereotypes—we see them individually perish with less regret, because we know the copies of them to be "eterne." But where a book is at once both good and rare—where the individual is almost the species, and when *that* perishes,

> We know not where is that Promethean torch
> That can its light relumine—

such a book, for instance, as the *Life of the Duke of Newcastle*, by his Duchess—no casket is rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable, to honour and keep safe such a jewel.

Not only rare volumes of this description, which seem hopeless ever to be reprinted; but old editions of writers, such as Sir Philip Sydney, Bishop Taylor, Milton in his prose-works, Fuller—of whom we *have* reprints, yet the books themselves, though they go about, and are talked of here and there, we know, have not endenizened themselves (nor possibly ever will) in the national heart, so as to become stock books—it is good to possess these in durable and costly covers. I do not care for a First Folio of Shakespeare. I rather prefer the common editions of Rowe and Tonson without notes, and with *plates*, which,

being so execrably bad, serve as maps, or modest remembrancers, to the text; and without pretending to any supposable emulation with it, are so much better than the Shakespeare gallery *engravings*, which *did*. I have a community of feeling with my countrymen about his Plays, and I like those editions of him best, which have been oftenest tumbled about and handled.—On the contrary, I cannot read Beaumont and Fletcher but in Folio. The Octavo editions are painful to look at. I have no sympathy with them. If they were as much read as the current editions of the other poet, I should prefer them in that shape to the older one. I do not know a more heartless sight than the reprint of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*. What need was there of unearthing the bones of that fantastic old great man, to expose them in a winding-sheet of the newest fashion to modern censure? what hapless stationer could dream of Burton ever becoming popular?—The wretched Malone could not do worse, when he bribed the sexton of Stratford church to let him white-wash the painted effigy of old Shakespeare, which stood there, in rude but lively fashion depicted, to the very colour of the cheek, the eye, the eyebrow, hair, the very dress he used to wear—the only authentic testimony we had, however imperfect, of these curious parts and parcels of him. They covered him over with a coat of white paint. By ——, if I had been a justice of peace for Warwickshire, I would have clapt both commentator and sexton fast in the stocks, for a pair of meddling sacrilegious varlets.

I think I see them at their work—these sapient trouble-tombs.

Shall I be thought fantastical, if I confess, that the names of some of our poets sound sweeter, and have a finer relish to the ear—to mine, at least—than that of

Milton or of Shakespeare? It may be, that the latter are more staled and rung upon in common discourse. The sweetest names, and which carry a perfume in the mention, are, Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley.

Much depends upon *when* and *where* you read a book. In the five or six impatient minutes, before the dinner is quite ready, who would think of taking up the *Faerie Queen* for a stop-gap, or a volume of Bishop Andrewes' sermons?

Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him. But he brings his music, to which, who listens, had need bring docile thoughts, and purged ears.

Winter evenings—the world shut out—with less of ceremony the gentle Shakespeare enters. At such a season, the *Tempest*, or his own *Winter's Tale*—

These two poets you cannot avoid reading aloud—to yourself, or (as it chances) to some single person listening. More than one—and it degenerates into an audience.

Books of quick interest, that hurry on for incidents, are for the eye to glide over only. It will not do to read them out. I could never listen to even the better kind of modern novels without extreme irksomeness.

A newspaper, read out, is intolerable. In some of the Bank offices it is the custom (to save so much individual time) for one of the clerks—who is the best scholar—to commence upon *The Times*, or the *Chronicle*, and recite its entire contents aloud *pro bono publico*. With every advantage of lungs and elocution, the effect is singularly vapid. In barbers' shops and public-houses a fellow will get up, and spell out a paragraph which he communicates as some discovery. Another follows with *his* selection. So the entire journal transpires at length

by piece-meal. Seldom-readers are slow readers, and without this expedient, no one in the company would probably ever travel through the contents of a whole paper.

Newspapers always excite curiosity. No one ever lays one down without a feeling of disappointment.

What an eternal time that gentleman in black, at Nando's, keeps the paper! I am sick of hearing the waiter bawling out incessantly, "the *Chronicle* is in hand, Sir."

Coming in to an inn at night—having ordered your supper—what can be more delightful than to find lying in the window-seat, left there time out of mind by the carelessness of some former guest—two or three numbers of the old *Town and Country Magazine*, with its amusing *tête-à-tête* pictures—"The Royal Lover and Lady G——"; "The Melting Platonic and the Old Beau"—and such like antiquated scandal? Would you exchange it—at that time, and in that place—for a better book?

Poor Tobin, who latterly fell blind, did not regret it so much for the weightier kinds of reading—the *Paradise Lost*, or *Comus*, he could have *read* to him—but he missed the pleasure of skimming over with his own eye a magazine, or a light pamphlet.

I should not care to be caught in the serious avenues of some cathedral alone and reading *Candide*.

I do not remember a more whimsical surprise than having been once detected—by a familiar damsel—reclining at my ease upon the grass, on Primrose Hill (her Cythera), reading—*Pamela*. There was nothing in the book to make a man seriously ashamed at the exposure; but as she seated herself down by me, and seemed determined to read in company, I could have wished it had been—any other book. We read on very sociably

for a few pages; and, not finding the author much to her taste, she got up, and—went away. Gentle casuist, I leave it to thee to conjecture, whether the blush (for there was one between us) was the property of the nymph or the swain in this dilemma. From me you shall never get the secret.

I am not much a friend to out-of-doors reading. I cannot settle my spirits to it. I knew a Unitarian minister, who was generally to be seen upon Snow Hill (as yet Skinner's Street *was not*), between the hours of ten and eleven in the morning, studying a volume of Lardner. I own this to have been a strain of abstraction beyond my reach. I used to admire how he sidled along, keeping clear of secular contacts. An illiterate encounter with a porter's knot, or a bread basket, would have quickly put to flight all the theology I am master of, and have left me worse than indifferent to the five points.

There is a class of street-readers, whom I can never contemplate without affection—the poor gentry, who, not having wherewithal to buy or hire a book, filch a little learning at the open stalls—the owner, with his hard eye, casting envious looks at them all the while, and thinking when they will have done. Venturing tenderly, page after page, expecting every moment when he shall interpose his interdict, and yet unable to deny themselves the gratification, they "snatch a fearful joy." Martin B——,[1] in this way, by daily fragments, got through two volumes of *Clarissa*, when the stall-keeper damped his laudable ambition, by asking him (it was in his younger days) whether he meant to purchase the work. M. declares, that under no circumstances in his life did he ever peruse a book with half the satisfaction which he took in those uneasy snatches. A quaint poetess of our

[1] Martin Burney.

day[1] has moralized upon this subject in two very touching but homely stanzas.

I saw a boy with eager eye
Open a book upon a stall,
And read, as he'd devour it all;
Which when the stall-man did espy,
Soon to the boy I heard him call,
"You, Sir, you never buy a book,
Therefore in one you shall not look."
The boy pass'd slowly on, and with a sigh
He wish'd he never had been taught to read.
Then of the old churl's books he should have had no
  need.

Of sufferings the poor have many,
Which never can the rich annoy:
I soon perceiv'd another boy,
Who look'd as if he had not any
Food, for that day at least—enjoy
The sight of cold meat in a tavern larder.
This boy's case, then thought I, is surely harder,
Thus hungry, longing, thus without a penny,
Beholding choice of dainty-dressed meat:
No wonder if he wish he ne'er had learn'd to eat.

CHARLES LAMB—*Last Essays of Elia.*

[1] Mary Lamb.

AN OLD SCOTCH GARDENER

I THINK I might almost have said the last: somewhere, indeed, in the uttermost glens of the Lammermuir or among the south-western hills there may yet linger a decrepit representative of this bygone good fellowship; but as far as actual experience goes, I have only met one man in my life who might fitly be quoted in the same breath with Andrew Fairservice—though without his vices. He was a man whose very presence could impart a savour of quaint antiquity to the baldest and most modern flower-pots. There was a dignity about his tall stooping form, and an earnestness in his wrinkled face that recalled Don Quixote; but a Don Quixote who had come through the training of the Covenant, and been nourished in his youth on *Walker's Lives* and *The Hind Let Loose.*

Now, as I could not bear to let such a man pass away with no sketch preserved of his old-fashioned virtues, I hope the reader will take this as an excuse for the present paper, and judge as kindly as he can the infirmities of my description. To me, who find it so difficult to tell the little that I know, he stands essentially as a *genius loci.* It is impossible to separate his spare form and old straw hat from the garden in the lap of the hill, with its rocks overgrown with clematis, its shadowy walks, and the splendid breadth of champaign that one saw from the north-west corner. The garden and gardener seem part and parcel of each other. When I take him from his right surroundings and try to make him appear for me on paper, he looks unreal and phantasmal; the best that

I can say may convey some notion to those that never saw him, but to me it will be ever impotent.

The first time that I saw him, I fancy Robert was pretty old already: he had certainly begun to use his years as a stalking horse. Latterly he was beyond all the impudencies of logic, considering a reference to the parish register worth all the reasons in the world. "*I am too old and well stricken in years,*" he was wont to say; and I never found anyone bold enough to answer the argument. Apart from this vantage that he kept over all who were not yet octogenarian, he had some other drawbacks as a gardener. He shrank the very place he cultivated. The dignity and reduced gentility of his appearance made the small garden cut a sorry figure. He was full of tales of greater situations in his younger days. He spoke of castles and parks with a humbling familiarity. He told of places where under-gardeners had trembled at his looks, where there were meres and swanneries, labyrinths of walk and wildernesses of sad shrubbery in his control, till you could not help feeling that it was condescension on his part to dress your humbler garden plots. You were thrown at once into an invidious position. You felt that you were profiting by the needs of dignity, and that his poverty and not his will consented to your vulgar rule. Involuntarily you compared yourself with the swineherd that made Alfred watch his cakes, or some bloated citizen who may have given his sons and his condescension to the fallen Dionysius. Nor were the disagreeables purely fanciful and metaphysical, for the sway that he exercised over your feelings he extended to your garden, and, through the garden, to your diet. He would trim a hedge, throw away a favourite plant, or fill the most favoured and fertile section of the garden with a vegetable that none of us could eat, in supreme contempt for

our opinion. If you asked him to send you in one of your own artichokes, "*That I wull, mem,*" he would say, "*with pleasure, for it is mair blessed to give than to receive.*" Ay, and even when, by extra twisting of the screw, we prevailed on him to prefer our commands to his own inclination, and he went away, stately and sad, professing that "*our wull was his pleasure,*" but yet reminding us that he would do it "*with feelin's*"—even then, I say, the triumphant master felt humbled in his triumph, felt that he ruled on sufferance only, that he was taking a mean advantage of the other's low estate, and that the whole scene had been one of those "slights that patient merit of the unworthy takes."

In flowers his taste was old-fashioned and catholic; affecting sunflowers and dahlias, wallflowers and roses, and holding in supreme aversion whatsoever was fantastic, new-fashioned or wild. There was one exception to this sweeping ban. Foxgloves, though undoubtedly guilty on the last count, he not only spared, but loved; and when the shrubbery was being thinned, he stayed his hand and dexterously manipulated his bill in order to save every stately stem. In boyhood, as he told me once, speaking in that tone that only actors and the old-fashioned common folk can use nowadays, his heart grew "*proud*" within him when he came on a burn-course among the braes of Manor that shone purple with their graceful trophies; and not all his apprenticeship and practice for so many years of precise gardening had banished these boyish recollections from his heart. Indeed, he was a man keenly alive to the beauty of all that was bygone. He abounded in old stories of his boyhood, and kept pious account of all his former pleasures; and when he went (on a holiday) to visit one of the fabled great places of the earth where he had served before, he came back full of little pre-Raphaelite

reminiscences that showed real passion for the past, such as might have shaken hands with Hazlitt or Jean-Jacques.

But however his sympathy with his old feelings might affect his liking for the foxgloves, the very truth was that he scorned all flowers together. They were but garnishings, childish toys, trifling ornaments for ladies' chimney-shelves. It was towards his cauliflowers and peas and cabbage that his heart grew warm. His preference for the more useful growths was such that cabbages were found invading the flower-pots, and an outpost of savoys was once discovered in the centre of the lawn. He would prelect over some thriving plant with wonderful enthusiasm, piling reminiscence on reminiscence of former and perhaps yet finer specimens. Yet even then he did not let the credit leave himself. He had, indeed, raised "*finer o' them*"; but it seemed that no one else had been favoured with a like success. All other gardeners, in fact, were mere foils to his own superior attainments; and he would recount, with perfect soberness of voice and visage, how so and so had wondered, and such another could scarcely give credit to his eyes. Nor was it with his rivals only that he parted praise and blame. If you remarked how well a plant was looking, he would gravely touch his hat and thank you with solemn unction; all credit in the matter falling to him. If, on the other hand, you called his attention to some back-going vegetable, he would quote Scripture: "*Paul may plant and Appollos may water*"; all blame being left to providence, on the score of deficient rain or untimely frosts.

There was one thing in the garden that shared his preference with his favourite cabbages and rhubarb, and that other was the beehive. Their sound, their industry, perhaps their sweet product also, had taken hold of his

imagination and heart, whether by way of memory or no I cannot say, although perhaps the bees too were linked to him by some recollection of Manor braes and his country childhood. Nevertheless, he was too chary of his personal safety or (let me rather say) his personal dignity to mingle any active office towards them. But he could stand by while one of the contemned rivals did the work for him, and protest that it was quite safe in spite of his own considerate distance and the cries of the distressed assistant. In regard to bees, he was rather a man of word than deed, and some of his most striking sentences had the bees for text. "*They are indeed wonderfu' creatures, mem,*" he said once. "*They just mind me o' what the Queen of Sheba said to Solomon—and I think she said it wi' a sigh—'The half of it hath not been told unto me.'*"

As far as the Bible goes, he was deeply read, like the old Covenanters, of whom he was the worthy representative, his mouth was full of sacred quotations; it was the book that he had studied most and thought upon most deeply. To many people in his station the Bible, and perhaps Burns, are the only books of any vital literary merit that they read, feeding themselves, for the rest, on the draff of country newspapers, and the very instructive but not very palatable pabulum of some cheap educational series. This was Robert's position. All day long he had dreamed of the Hebrew stories, and his head had been full of Hebrew poetry and Gospel ethics; until they had struck deep root into his heart, and the very expressions had become a part of him; so that he rarely spoke without some antique idiom or Scripture mannerism that gave a raciness to the merest trivialities of talk. But the influence of the Bible did not stop here. There was more in Robert than quaint phrase and ready store of reference. He was imbued with a spirit of peace and

love: he interposed between man and wife: he threw himself between the angry, touching his hat the while with all the ceremony of an usher: he protected the birds from everybody but himself, seeing, I suppose, a great difference between official execution and wanton sport. His mistress telling him one day to put some ferns into his master's particular corner, and adding, "Though, indeed, Robert, he doesn't deserve them, for he wouldn't help me to gather them," "*Eh mem,*" replies Robert, "*but I wouldnae say that, for I think he's just a most deservin' gentleman.*" Again, two of our friends, who were on intimate terms, and accustomed to use language to each other, somewhat without the bounds of the parliamentary, happened to differ about the position of a seat in the garden. The discussion, as was usual when these two were at it, soon waxed tolerably insulting on both sides. Everyone accustomed to such controversies several times a day was quietly enjoying this prize-fight of somewhat abusive wit—everyone but Robert, to whom the perfect good faith of the whole quarrel seemed unquestionable, and who, after having waited till his conscience would suffer him to wait no more, and till he expected every moment that the disputants would fall to blows, cut suddenly in with tones of almost tearful entreaty: "*Eh, but, gentlemen, I wad hae nae mair words about it!*" One thing was noticeable about Robert's religion: it was neither dogmatic nor sectarian. He never expatiated (at least, in my hearing) on the doctrines of his creed, and he never condemned anybody else. I have no doubt that he held all Roman Catholics, Atheists, and Mahometans as considerably out of it; I don't believe he had any sympathy for Prelacy; and the natural feelings of man must have made him a little sore about Free-Churchism; but at least, he never talked about these views, never grew controversially noisy, and

never openly aspersed the belief or practice of anybody. Now all this is not generally characteristic of Scotch piety; Scotch sects being churches militant with a vengeance, and Scotch believers perpetual crusaders the one against the other, and missionaries the one to the other. Perhaps Robert's originally tender heart was what made the difference; or, perhaps, his solitary and pleasant labour among fruits and flowers had taught him a more sunshiny creed than those whose work is among the tares of fallen humanity; and the soft influences of the garden had entered deep into his spirit,

> "Annihilating all that's made
> To a green thought in a green shade."

But I could go on for ever chronicling his golden sayings or telling of his innocence and living piety. I had meant to tell of his cottage with the German pipe hung reverently above the fire, and the shell box that he had made for his son, of which he would say pathetically: "*He was real pleased wi' it at first, but I think he's got a kind o' tired o' it now*"—the son being then a man of about forty. But I will let all these pass. "'Tis more significant: he's dead." The earth, that he had digged so much in his life, was dug out by another for himself; and the flowers that he had tended drew their life still from him, but in a new and nearer way. A bird flew about the open grave as if it too wished to honour the obsequies of one who had so often quoted Scripture in favour of its kind: "Are not two sparrows sold for one farthing, and yet not one of them falleth to the ground."

Yes, he is dead. But the kings did not rise in the place of death to greet him "with taunting proverbs" as they rose to greet the haughty Babylonian; for in his life he was lowly, and a peacemaker and a servant of God.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON—*Memories and Portraits.*

THE IDEAL HOUSE

Two things are necessary in any neighbourhood where we propose to spend a life: a desert and some living water.

There are many parts of the earth's face which offer the necessary combination of a certain wildness with a kindly variety. A great prospect is desirable, but the want may be otherwise supplied; even greatness can be found on the small scale; for the mind and the eye measure differently. Bold rocks near hand are more inspiriting than distant Alps, and the thick fern upon a Surrey heath makes a fine forest for the imagination, and the dotted yew trees noble mountains. A Scottish moor with birches and firs grouped here and there upon a knoll, or one of those rocky sea-side deserts of Provence overgrown with rosemary and thyme and smoking with aroma, are places where the mind is never weary. Forests, being more enclosed, are not at first sight so attractive, but they exercise a spell; they must, however, be diversified with either heath or rock, and are hardly to be considered perfect without conifers. Even sand-hills, with their intricate plan, and their gulls and rabbits, will stand well for the necessary desert.

The house must be within hail of either a little river or the sea. A great river is more fit for poetry than to adorn a neighbourhood; its sweep of waters increases the scale of the scenery and the distance of one notable object from another; and a lively burn gives us, in the space of a few yards, a greater variety of promontory and islet, of cascade, shallow goil, and boiling pool, with

answerable changes both of song and colour, than a navigable stream in many hundred miles. The fish, too, make a more considerable feature of the brook-side, and the trout plumping in the shadow takes the ear. A stream should, besides, be narrow enough to cross, or the burn hard by a bridge, or we are at once shut out of Eden. The quantity of water need be of no concern, for the mind sets the scale, and can enjoy a Niagara Fall of thirty inches. Let us approve the singer of

> Shallow rivers by whose falls
> Melodious birds sing madrigals.

If the sea is to be our ornamental water, choose an open seaboard with a heavy beat of surf; one much broken in outline, with small havens and dwarf headlands; if possible a few islets; and as a first necessity, rocks reaching out into deep water. Such a rock on a calm day is a better station than the top of Teneriffe or Chimborazo. In short, both for the desert and the water, the conjunction of many near and bold details is bold scenery for the imagination and keeps the mind alive.

Given these two prime luxuries, the nature of the country where we are to live is, I had almost said, indifferent; after that, inside the garden, we can construct a country of our own. Several old trees, a considerable variety of level, several well-grown hedges to divide our garden into provinces, a good extent of old well-set turf, and thickets of shrubs and evergreens to be cut into and cleared at the new owner's pleasure, are the qualities to be sought for in your chosen land. Nothing is more delightful than a succession of small lawns, opening one out of the other through tall hedges; these have all the charm of the old bowling-green repeated, do not require the labour of many trimmers, and afford a series of changes. You must have much lawn against the early

summer, so as to have a great field of daisies, the year's morning frost; as you must have a wood of lilacs, to enjoy to the full the period of their blossoming. Hawthorn is another of the spring's ingredients; but it is even best to have a rough public lane at one side of your enclosure which, at the right season, shall become an avenue of bloom and odour. The old flowers are the best and should grow carelessly in corners. Indeed, the ideal fortune is to find an old garden, once very richly cared for, since sunk into neglect, and to tend, not repair, that neglect; it will thus have a smack of nature and wildness which skilful dispositions cannot overtake. The gardener should be an idler, and have a gross partiality to the kitchen plots: an eager or toilful gardener misbecomes the garden landscape; a tasteful gardener will be ever meddling, will keep the borders raw, and take the bloom off nature. Close adjoining, if you are in the south, an olive-yard, if in the north, a swarded apple-orchard reaching to the stream, completes your miniature domain; but this is perhaps best entered through a door in the high fruit-wall; so that you close the door behind you on your sunny plots, your hedges and evergreen jungle, when you go down to watch the apples falling in the pool. It is a golden maxim to cultivate the garden for the nose, and the eyes will take care of themselves. Nor must the ear be forgotten: without birds, a garden is a prison-yard. There is a garden near Marseilles on a steep hill-side, walking by which, upon a sunny morning, your ear will suddenly be ravished with a burst of small and very cheerful singing: some score of cages being set out there to sun the occupants. This is a heavenly surprise to any passer-by; but the price paid, to keep so many ardent and winged creatures from their liberty, will make the luxury too dear for any thoughtful pleasure-lover. There is only one sort of bird

that I can tolerate caged, though even then I think it hard, and that is what is called in France the Bec-d'Argent. I once had two of these pigmies in captivity; and in the quiet, bare house upon a silent street where I was then living, their song, which was not much louder than a bee's, but airily musical, kept me in a perpetual good humour. I put the cage upon my table when I worked, carried it with me when I went for meals, and kept it by my head at night: the first thing in the morning, these *maestrini* would pipe up. But these, even if you can pardon their imprisonment, are for the house. In the garden the wild birds must plant a colony, a chorus of the lesser warblers that should be almost deafening, a blackbird in the lilacs, a nightingale down the lane, so that you must stroll to hear it, and yet a little farther, tree-tops populous with rooks.

Your house should not command much outlook; it should be set deep and green, though upon rising ground, or, if possible, crowning a knoll, for the sake of drainage. Yet it must be open to the east, or you will miss the sunrise; sunset occurring so much later, you can go up a few steps and look the other way. A house of more than two stories is a mere barrack; indeed the ideal is of one story, raised upon cellars. If the rooms are large, the house may be small: a single room, lofty, spacious, and lightsome, is more palatial than a castleful of cabinets and cupboards. Yet size in a house, and some extent and intricacy of corridor, is certainly delightful to the flesh. The reception room should be, if possible, a place of many recesses, which are "petty retiring places for conference"; but it must have one long wall with a divan: for a day spent upon a divan, among a world of cushions, is as full of diversion as to travel. The eating-room, in the French mode, should be *ad hoc*: unfurnished, but with a buffet, the table,

necessary chairs, one or two of Canaletto's etchings, and a tile fire-place for the winter. In neither of these public places should there be anything beyond a shelf or two of books; but the passages may be one library from end to end, and the stair, if there be one, lined with volumes in old leather, very brightly carpeted, and leading half-way up, and by way of landing, to a windowed recess with a fire-place; this window, almost alone in the house, should command a handsome prospect. Husband and wife must each possess a studio; on the woman's sanctuary I hesitate to dwell, and turn to the man's. The walls are shelved waist-high for books, and the top thus forms a continuous table running round the wall. Above are prints, a large map of the neighbourhood, a Corot and a Claude or two. The room is very spacious, and the five tables and two chairs are but as islands. One table is for actual work, one close by for references in use; one, very large, for MSS. or proofs that wait their turn; one kept clear for an occasion; and the fifth is the map table, groaning under a collection of large-scale maps and charts. Of all books these are the least wearisome to read and the richest in matter; the course of roads and rivers, the contour lines and the forests in the maps—the reefs, soundings, anchors, sailing marks and little pilot-pictures in the charts—and, in both, the bead-roll of names, make them of all printed matter the most fit to stimulate and satisfy the fancy. The chair in which you write is very low and easy, and backed into a corner; at one elbow the fire twinkles; close at the other, if you are a little inhumane, your cage of silver-bills are twittering into song.

Joined along by a passage, you may reach the great, sunny, glass-roofed, and tiled gymnasium, at the far end of which, lined with bright marble, is your plunge and swimming-bath, fitted with a capacious boiler.

The whole loft of the house from end to end makes one undivided chamber; here are set forth tables on which to model imaginary or actual countries in putty or plaster, with tools and hardy pigments; a carpenter's bench; and a spared corner for photography, while at the far end a space is kept clear for playing soldiers. Two boxes contain the two armies of some five hundred horse and foot; two others the ammunition of each side, and a fifth the foot-rules and the three colours of chalk, with which you lay down, or, after a day's play, refresh the outlines of the country; red or white for the two kinds of road (according as they are suitable or not for the passage of ordnance), and blue for the course of the obstructing rivers. Here I foresee that you may pass much happy time; against a good adversary a game may well continue for a month; for with armies so considerable three moves will occupy an hour. It will be found to set an excellent edge on this diversion if one of the players shall, every day or so, write a report of the operations in the character of army correspondent.

I have left to the last the little room for winter evenings. This should be furnished in warm positive colours, and sofas and floor thick with rich furs. The hearth, where you burn wood of aromatic quality on silver dogs, tiled round about with Bible pictures; the seats deep and easy; a single Titian in a gold frame; a white bust or so upon a bracket; a rack for the journals of the week; a table for the books of the year; and close in a corner the three shelves full of eternal books that never weary: Shakespeare, Molière, Montaigne, Lamb, Sterne, De Musset's comedies (the one volume open at *Carmosine* and the other at *Fantasio*); the "Arabian Nights," and kindred stories, in Weber's solemn volumes; Borrow's *Bible in Spain*, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Guy Mannering*,

and *Rob Roy*, *Monte Cristo*, and the *Vicomte de Bragelonne*, immortal Boswell sole among biographers, Chaucer, Herrick, and the *State Trials*.

The bedrooms are large, airy, with almost no furniture, floors of varnished wood, and at the bed-head, in case of insomnia, one shelf of books of a particular and dippable order, such as Pepys, the *Paston Letters*, Burt's *Letters from the Highlands*, or the *Newgate Calendar*. . . .

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON—*Later Essays*.

THE ART OF THE ESSAYIST

THERE is a pleasant story of an itinerant sign-painter who in going his rounds came to a village inn upon whose sign-board he had had his eye for some months and had watched with increasing hope and delight its rapid progress to blurred and faded dimness. To his horror he found a brand-new varnished sign. He surveyed it with disgust, and said to the inn-keeper, who stood nervously by hoping for a professional compliment, "This looks as if someone had been doing it himself."

That sentence holds within it the key to the whole mystery of essay-writing. An essay is a thing which someone does himself; and the point of the essay is not the subject, for any subject will suffice, but the charm of personality. It must concern itself with something "jolly," as the schoolboy says, something smelt, heard, seen, perceived, invented, thought; but the essential thing is that the writer shall have formed his own impression, and that it shall have taken shape in his own mind; and the charm of the essay depends upon the charm of the mind that has conceived and recorded the impression. It will be seen, then, that the essay need not concern itself with anything definite; it need not have an intellectual or a philosophical or a religious or a humorous motif; but equally none of these subjects are ruled out. The only thing necessary is that the thing or the thought should be vividly apprehended, enjoyed, felt to be beautiful, and expressed with a certain gusto. It need conform to no particular rules. All literature

answers to something in life, some habitual form of human expression. The stage imitates life, calling in the services of the eye and the ear; there is the narrative of the teller of tales or the minstrel; the song, the letter, the talk—all forms of human expression and communication have their antitypes in literature. The essay is the reverie, the frame of mind in which a man says, in the words of the old song, "Says I to myself, says I."

It is generally supposed that Montaigne is the first writer who wrote what may technically be called essays. His pieces are partly autobiographical, partly speculative, and to a great extent ethical. But the roots of his writing lie far back in literary history. He owed a great part of his inspiration to Cicero, who treated of abstract topics in a conversational way with a romantic background; and this he owed to Plato, whose dialogues undoubtedly contain the germ of both the novel and the essay. Plato is in truth far more the forerunner of the novelist than of the philosopher. He made a background of life, he peopled his scenes with bright boys and amiable elders—oh that all scenes were so peopled!—and he discussed ethical and speculative problems of life and character with a vital rather than with a philosophical interest. Plato's dialogues would be essays but for the fact that they have a dramatic colouring, while the essence of the essay is soliloquy. But in the writings of Cicero, such as the *De Senectute*, the dramatic interest is but slight, and the whole thing approaches far more nearly to the essay than to the novel. Probably Cicero supplied to his readers the function both of the essayist and the preacher, and fed the needs of so-called thoughtful readers by dallying, in a fashion which it is hardly unjust to call twaddling, with familiar ethical problems of conduct and character. The charm of Montaigne is the charm of personality—frankness, gusto, acute obser-

vation, lively acquaintance with men and manners. He is ashamed of recording nothing that interested him; and a certain discreet shamelessness must always be the characteristic of the essayist, for the essence of his art is to say what has pleased him without too prudently considering whether it is worthy of the attention of the well-informed mind.

I doubt if the English temperament is wholly favourable to the development of the essayist. In the first place, an Anglo-Saxon likes doing things better than thinking about them; and in his memories, he is apt to recall how a thing was done rather than why it was done. In the next place, we are naturally rather prudent and secretive; we say that a man must not wear his heart upon his sleeve, and that is just what the essayist must do. We have a horror of giving ourselves away, and we like to keep ourselves to ourselves. "The Englishman's home is his castle," says another proverb. But the essayist must not have a castle, or if he does, both the grounds and the living-rooms must be open to the inspection of the public.

Lord Brougham, who revelled in advertisement, used to allow his house to be seen by visitors, and the butler had orders that if a party of people came to see the house, Lord Brougham was to be informed of the fact. He used to hurry to the library and take up a book, in order that the tourists might nudge each other and say in whispers, "There is the Lord Chancellor." That is the right frame of mind for the essayist. He may enjoy privacy, but he is no less delighted that people should see him enjoying it.

The essay has taken very various forms in England. Sir Thomas Browne, in such books as *Religio Medici* and *Urn-Burial*, wrote essays of an elaborate rhetorical style, the long fine sentences winding themselves out in deli-

cate weft-like trails of smoke on a still air, hanging in translucent veils. Addison, in the *Spectator*, treated with delicate humour of life and its problems, and created what was practically a new form in the essay of emotional sentiment evoked by solemn scenes and fine associations. Charles Lamb treated romantically the homeliest stuff of life, and showed how the simplest and commonest experiences were rich in emotion and humour. The beauty and dignity of common life were his theme. De Quincey wrote what may be called impassioned autobiography, and brought to his task a magical control of long-drawn and musical cadences. And then we come to such a writer as Pater, who used the essay for the expression of exquisite artistic sensation. These are only a few instances of the way in which the essay has been used in English literature. But the essence is throughout the same; it is personal sensation, personal impression, evoked by something strange or beautiful or curious or interesting or amusing. It has thus a good deal in common with the art of the lyrical poet and the writer of sonnets, but it has all the freedom of prose, its more extended range, its use of less strictly poetical effects, such as humour in particular. Humour is alien to poetical effect, because poetry demands a certain sacredness and solemnity of mood. The poet is emotional in a reverential way; he is thrilled, he loves, he worships, he sorrows; but it is all essentially grave, because he wishes to recognize the sublime and uplifted elements of life; he wishes to free himself from all discordant, absurd, fantastic, undignified contrasts, as he would extrude laughter and chatter and comfortable ease from some stately act of ceremonial worship. It is quite true that the essayist has a full right to such a mood if he chooses; and such essays as Pater's are all conceived in a sort of rapture of holiness, in a region

from which all that is common and homely is carefully fenced out. But the essayist may have a larger range, and the strength of a writer like Charles Lamb is that he condescends to use the very commonest materials, and transfigures the simplest experiences with a fairy-like delicacy and a romantic glow. A poet who has far more in common with the range of the essayist is Robert Browning, and there are many of his poems, though not perhaps his best, where his frank amassing of grotesque detail, his desire to include rather than exclude the homelier sorts of emotion, his robust and not very humorous humour, make him an impressionist rather than a lyrist. As literature develops, the distinction between poetry and prose will no doubt become harder to maintain. Coleridge said in a very fruitful maxim: "The opposite of poetry is not prose but science; the opposite of prose is not poetry but verse." That is to say, poetry has as its object the kindling of emotion, and science is its opposite, because science is the dispassionate statement of fact; but prose can equally be used as a vehicle for the kindling of emotion, and therefore may be in its essence poetical: but when it is a technical description of a certain kind of structure its opposite is verse—that is to say, language arranged in metrical and rhythmical form. We shall probably come to think that the essayist is more of a poet than the writer of epics, and that the divisions of literature will tend to be on the one hand the art of clear and logical statement, and on the other the art of emotional and imaginative expression.

We must remember in all this that the nomenclature of literature, the attempt to classify the forms of literary expression, is a confusing and a bewildering thing unless it is used merely for convenience. It is the merest pedantry to say that literature must conform to estab-

lished usages and types. The essence of it is that it is a large force flowing in any channel that it can, and the classification of art is a mere classification of channels. What lies behind all art is the principle of wonder and of arrested attention. It need not be only the sense of beauty; it may be the sense of fitness, of strangeness, of completeness, of effective effort. The amazement of the savage at the sight of a civilized town is not the sense of beauty, it is the sense of force, of mysterious resources, of incredible products, of things unintelligibly and even magically made; and then too there is the instinct for perceiving all that is grotesque, absurd, amusing and jocose, which one sees exhibited in children at the sight of the parrot's crafty and solemn eye and his exaggerated imitation of human speech, at the unusual dress and demeanour of the clown, at the grotesque simulation by the gnarled and contorted tree of something human or reptile. And then, too, there is the strange property in human beings which makes disaster amusing, if its effects are not prejudicial to oneself; that sense which makes the waiter on the pantomime stage, who falls headlong with a tray of crockery, an object to provoke the loudest and most spontaneous mirth of which the ordinary human being is capable. The moralist who would be sympathetically shocked at the rueful abrasions of the waiter, or mournful over the waste of human skill and endeavour involved in the breakage, would be felt by all human beings to have something priggish in his composition and to be too good, as they say, to live.

It is with these rudimentary and inexplicable emotions that the essayist may concern himself, even though the poet be forbidden to do so; and the appeal of the essayist to the world at large will depend upon the extent to which he experiences some common emotion, sees it in all its bearings, catches the salient features of

the scene, and records it in vivid and impressive speech.

The essayist is therefore to a certain extent bound to be a spectator of life; he must be like the man in Browning's fine poem "How it strikes a Contemporary," who walked about, took note of everything, looked at the new house building, poked his stick into the mortar.

> He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
> The man who slices lemons into drink,
> The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys
> That volunteer to help him turn its winch;
> He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
> And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,
> And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall;
> He took such cognizance of men and things!
> If any beat a horse, you felt he saw—
> If any cursed a woman, he took note,
> Yet stared at nobody—they stared at him,
> And found less to their pleasure than surprise,
> He seemed to know them, and expect as much.

That is the essayist's material; he may choose the scene, he may select the sort of life he is interested in, whether it is the street or the countryside or the sea-beach or the picture-gallery; but once there, wherever he may be, he must devote himself to seeing and realizing and getting it all by heart. The writer must not be too much interested in the action and conduct of life. If he is a politician, or a soldier, or an emperor, or a plough-boy, or a thief, and is absorbed in what he is doing, with a vital anxiety to make profit or position or influence out of it; if he hates his opponents and rewards his friends; if he condemns, despises, disapproves, he at once forfeits sympathy and largeness of view. He must believe with all his might in the interest of what he enjoys, to the extent at all events of believing it worth recording and representing, but he must not believe too

solemnly or urgently in the importance and necessity of any one sort of business or occupation. The eminent banker, the social reformer, the forensic pleader, the fanatic, the crank, the puritan—these are not the stuff out of which the essayist is made; he may have ethical preferences, but he must not indulge in moral indignation; he must be essentially tolerant, and he must discern quality rather than solidity. He must be concerned with the pageant of life, as it weaves itself with a moving tapestry of scenes and figures rather than with the aims and purposes of life. He must, in fact, be preoccupied with things as they appear, rather than with their significance or their ethical example.

I have little doubt in my own mind that the charm of the familiar essayist depends upon his power of giving the sense of a good-humoured, gracious and reasonable personality and establishing a sort of pleasant friendship with his reader. One does not go to an essayist with a desire for information, or with an expectation of finding a clear statement of a complicated subject; that is not the mood in which one takes up a volume of essays. What one rather expects to find is a companionable treatment of that vast mass of little problems and floating ideas which are aroused and evoked by our passage through the world, our daily employment, our leisure hours, our amusements and diversions, and above all by our relations with other people—all the unexpected, inconsistent, various simple stuff of life; the essayist ought to be able to impart a certain beauty and order into it, to delineate, let us say, the vague emotions aroused in solitude or in company by the sight of scenery, the aspect of towns, the impressions of art and books, the interplay of human qualities and characteristics, the half-formed hopes and desires and fears and joys that form so large a part of our daily thoughts. The

essayist ought to be able to indicate a case or a problem that is apt to occur in ordinary life and suggest the theory of it, to guess what it is that makes our moods resolute or fitful, why we act consistently or inconsistently, what it is that repels or attracts us in our dealings with other people, what our private fancies are. The good essayist is the man who makes a reader say: "Well, I have often thought all those things, but I never discerned before any connection between them, nor got so far as to put them into words." And thus the essayist must have a great and far-reaching curiosity; he must be interested rather than displeased by the differences of human beings and by their varied theories. He must recognize the fact that most people's convictions are not the result of reason, but a mass of associations, traditions, things half-understood, phrases, examples, loyalties, whims. He must care more about the inconsistency of humanity than about its dignity; and he must study more what people actually do think about than what they ought to think about. He must not be ashamed of human weaknesses or shocked by them, and still less disgusted by them; but at the same time he must keep in mind the flashes of fine idealism, the passionate visions, the irresponsible humours, the salient peculiarities, that shoot like sunrays through the dull cloudiness of so many human minds, and make one realize that humanity is at once above itself and in itself, and that we are greater than we know; for the interest of the world to the ardent student of it is that we most of us seem to have got hold of something that is bigger than we quite know how to deal with; something remote and far off, which we have seen in a distant vision, which we cannot always remember or keep clear in our minds. The supreme fact of human nature is its duality, its tendency to pull different ways, the tug-of-war between

Devil and Baker which lies inside our restless brains. And the confessed aim of the essayist is to make people interested in life and in themselves and in the part they can take in life; and he does that best if he convinces men and women that life is a fine sort of a game, in which they can take a hand; and that every existence, however confined or restricted, is full of outlets and pulsing channels, and that the interest and joy of it is not confined to the politician or the millionaire, but is pretty fairly distributed, so long as one has time to attend to it, and is not preoccupied in some concrete aim or vulgar ambition.

Because the great secret which the true essayist whispers in our ears is that the worth of experience is not measured by what is called success, but rather resides in a fulness of life: that success tends rather to obscure and to diminish experience, and that we may miss the point of life by being too important, and that the end of it all is the degree in which we give rather than receive.

The poet perhaps is the man who sees the greatness of life best, because he lives most in its beauty and fineness. But my point is that the essayist is really a lesser kind of poet, working in simpler and humbler materials, more in the glow of life perhaps than in the glory of it, and not finding anything common or unclean.

The essayist is the opposite of the romancer, because his one and continuous aim is to keep the homely materials in view; to face actual conditions, not to fly from them We think meanly of life if we believe that it has no sublime moments; but we think sentimentally of it if we believe that it has nothing but sublime moments. The essayist wants to hold the balance; and if he is apt to neglect the sublimities of life, it is because he is apt to think that they can take care of themselves; and that if there is the joy of adventure, the thrill of the

start in the fresh air of the morning, the rapture of ardent companionship, the gladness of the arrival, yet there must be long spaces in between, when the pilgrim jogs steadily along, and seems to come no nearer to the spire on the horizon or to the shining embanked cloud-land of the West. He has nothing then but his own thoughts to help him, unless he is alert to see what is happening in hedgerow and copse, and the work of the essayist is to make something rich and strange of those seemingly monotonous spaces, those lengths of level road.

Is, then, the Essay in literature a thing which simply stands outside classification, like Argon among the elements, of which the only thing which can be predicated is that it is there? Or like Justice in Plato's *Republic*, a thing which the talkers set out to define, and which ends by being the one thing left in a state when the definable qualities are taken away? No, it is not that. It is rather like what is called an organ prelude, a little piece with a theme, not very strict perhaps in form, but which can be fancifully treated, modulated from, and coloured at will. It is a little criticism of life at some one point clearly enough defined.

We may follow any mood, we may look at life in fifty different ways—the only thing we must not do is to despise or deride, out of ignorance or prejudice, the influences which affect others; because the essence of all experience is that we should perceive something which we do not begin by knowing, and learn that life has a fulness and a richness in all sorts of diverse ways which we do not at first even dream of suspecting.

The essayist, then, is in his particular fashion an interpreter of life, a critic of life. He does not see life as the historian, or as the philosopher, or as the poet, or as the novelist, and yet he has a touch of all these. He

is not concerned with discovering a theory of it all, or fitting the various parts of it into each other. He works rather on what is called the analytic method, observing, recording, interpreting, just as things strike him, and letting his fancy play over their beauty and significance; the end of it all being this: that he is deeply concerned with the charm and quality of things, and desires to put it all in the clearest and gentlest light, so that at least he may make others love life a little better, and prepare them for its infinite variety and alike for its joyful and mournful surprises.

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON.

THE SAMPHIRE GATHERER

At sunset, when the strong wind from the sea was beginning to feel cold, I stood on the top of the sand-hill looking down at an old woman hurrying about over the low damp ground beneath—a bit of sea-flat divided from the sea by the ridge of sand; and I wondered at her, because her figure was that of a feeble old woman, yet she moved—I had almost said flitted—over that damp level ground in a surprisingly swift light manner, pausing at intervals to stoop and gather something from the surface. But I couldn't see her distinctly enough to satisfy myself: the sun was sinking below the horizon, and that dimness in the air and coldness in the wind at day's decline, when the year too was declining, made all objects look dim. Going down to her I found that she was old, with thin grey hair on an uncovered head, a lean dark face with regular features and grey eyes that were not old and looked steadily at mine, affecting me with a sudden mysterious sadness. For they were unsmiling eyes and themselves expressed an unutterable sadness, as it appeared to me at the first swift glance; or perhaps not that, as it presently seemed, but a shadowy something which sadness had left in them, when all pleasure and all interest in life forsook her, with all affections, and she no longer cherished either memories or hopes. This may be nothing but conjecture or fancy, but if she had been a visitor from another world she could not have seemed more strange to me.

I asked her what she was doing there so late in the day, and she answered in a quiet even voice which had a

shadow in it too, that she was gathering samphire of that kind which grows on the flat saltings and has a dull green, leek-like, fleshy leaf. At this season, she informed me, it was fit for gathering to pickle and put by for use during the year. She carried a pail to put it in, and a table-knife in her hand to dig the plants up by the roots, and she also had an old sack in which she put every dry stick and chip of wood she came across. She added that she had gathered samphire at this same spot every August end for very many years.

I prolonged the conversation, questioning her and listening with affected interest to her mechanical answers, while trying to fathom those unsmiling, unearthly eyes that looked so steadily at mine.

And presently, as we talked, a babble of human voices reached our ears, and half turning we saw the crowd, or rather procession, of golfers coming from the golf-house by the links where they had been drinking tea. Ladies and gentlemen players, forty or more of them, following in a loose line, in couples and small groups, on their way to the Golfers' Hotel, a little farther up the coast; a remarkably good-looking lot with well-fed, happy faces, well dressed and in a merry mood, all freely talking and laughing. Some were staying at the hotel, and for the others a score or so of motor-cars were standing before its gates to take them inland to their homes, or to houses where they were staying.

We suspended the conversation while they were passing us, within three yards of where we stood, and as they passed the story of the links where they had been amusing themselves since luncheon-time came into my mind. The land there was owned by an old, an ancient, family; they had occupied it, so it is said, since the Conquest; but the head of the house was now poor, having no house property in London, no coal mines in

Wales, no income from any other source than the land, the twenty or thirty thousand acres let for farming. Even so he would not have been poor, strictly speaking, but for the sons, who preferred a life of pleasure in town, where they probably had private establishments of their own. At all events they kept race-horses, and had their cars, and lived in the best clubs, and year by year the patient old father was called upon to discharge their debts of honour. It was a painful position for so estimable a man to be placed in, and he was much pitied by his friends and neighbours, who regarded him as a worthy representative of the best and oldest family in the county. But he was compelled to do what he could to make both ends meet, and one of the little things he did was to establish golf-links over a mile or so of sand-hills, lying between the ancient coast village and the sea, and to build and run a Golfers' Hotel in order to attract visitors from all parts. In this way, incidentally, the villagers were cut off from their old direct way to the sea and deprived of those barren dunes, which were their open space and recreation ground and had stood them in the place of a common for long centuries. They were warned off and told that they must use a path to the beach which took them over half a mile from the village. And they had been very humble and obedient and had made no complaint. Indeed, the agent had assured them that they had every reason to be grateful to the overlord, since in return for that trivial inconvenience they had been put to they would have the golfers there, and there would be employment for some of the village boys as caddies. Nevertheless, I had discovered that they were not grateful but considered that an injustice had been done to them, and it rankled in their hearts.

I remembered all this while the golfers were streaming by, and wondered if this poor woman did not, like her

fellow-villagers, cherish a secret bitterness against those who had deprived them of the use of the dunes where for generations they had been accustomed to walk or sit or lie on the loose yellow sands among the barren grasses, and had also cut off their direct way to the sea where they went daily in search of bits of firewood and whatever else the waves threw up which would be a help to them in their poor lives.

If it be so, I thought, some change will surely come into those unchanging eyes at the sight of all these merry, happy golfers on their way to their hotel and their cars and luxurious homes.

But though I watched her face closely there was no change, no faintest trace of ill-feeling or feeling of any kind; only that same shadow which had been there was there still, and her fixed eyes were like those of a captive bird or animal, that gaze at us, yet seem not to see us but to look through and beyond us. And it was the same when they had all gone by and we finished our talk and I put money in her hand; she thanked me without a smile, in the same quiet even tone of voice in which she had replied to my question about the samphire.

I went up once more to the top of the ridge, and looking down saw her again as I had seen her at first, only dimmer, swiftly, lightly moving or flitting moth-like or ghost-like over the low flat salting, still gathering samphire in the cold wind, and the thought that came to me was that I was looking at and had been interviewing a being that was very like a ghost, or in any case a soul, a something which could not be described, like certain atmospheric effects in earth and water and sky which are ignored by the landscape painter. To protect himself he cultivates what is called the "sloth of the eye": he thrusts his fingers into his ears, so to speak, not to hear that mocking voice that follows and mocks

him with his miserable limitations. He who seeks to convey his impressions with a pen is almost as badly off: the most he can do in such instances as the one related, is to endeavour to convey the emotion evoked by what he has witnessed.

Let me then take the case of the man who has trained his eyes, or rather whose vision has unconsciously trained itself, to look at every face he meets, to find in most cases something, however little of the person's inner life. Such a man could hardly walk the length of the Strand and Fleet Street or of Oxford Street without being startled at the sight of a face which haunts him with its tragedy, its mystery, the strange things it has half revealed. But it does not haunt him long; another arresting face follows, and then another, and the impressions all fade and vanish from the memory in a little while. But from time to time, at long intervals, once perhaps in a lustrum, he will encounter a face that will not cease to haunt him, whose vivid impression will not fade for years. It was a face and eyes of that kind which I met in the samphire gatherer on that cold evening; but the mystery of it is a mystery still.

W. H. HUDSON—*A Traveller in Little Things.*

THIRD THOUGHTS

THIS story was told to me by a friend.

It is my destiny (said he) to buy in the dearest markets and to sell—if I succeed in selling at all—in the cheapest. Usually, indeed, having tired of a picture or decorative article, I have positively to give it away; almost to make its acceptance by another a personal favour to me. But the other day was marked by an exception to this rule so striking that I have been wondering if perhaps the luck has not changed and I am, after all, destined to be that most enviable thing, a successful dealer.

It happened thus. In drifting about the old curiosity shops of a cathedral city I came upon a portfolio of water-colour drawings, among which was one that to my eye would have been a possible Turner, even if an earlier owner had not shared that opinion or hope and set the magic name with all its initials (so often placed in the wrong order) beneath it.

"How much is this?" I asked scornfully.

"Well," said the dealer, "if it were a genuine Turner it would be worth anything. But let's say ten shillings. You can have it for that; but I don't mind if you don't, because I'm going to London next week and should take it with me to get an opinion."

I pondered.

"Mind you, I don't guarantee it," he added.

I gave him the ten shillings.

By what incredible means I found a purchaser for the drawing at fifty pounds there is no need to tell, for the point of this narrative resides not in bargaining with

collectors, but in bargaining with my own soul. The astonishing fact remains that I achieved a profit of forty-nine pounds ten and was duly elated. I then began to think.

The dealer (so my thoughts ran) in that little street by the cathedral west door, he ought to participate in this. He behaved very well to me and I ought to behave well to him. It would be only fair to give him half.

Thereupon I sat down and wrote a little note saying that the potential Turner drawing, which no doubt he recollected, had turned out to be authentic, and I had great pleasure in enclosing him half of the proceeds, as I considered that the only just and decent course.

Having no stamps and the hour being late I did not post this, and went to bed.

At about 3.30 a.m. I woke widely up and, according to custom, began to review my life's errors, which are in no danger of ever suffering from loneliness. From these I reached, by way of mitigation, my recent successful piece of chaffering, and put the letter to the dealer under both examination and cross-examination. Why (so my thoughts ran) give him half? Why be Quixotic? This is no world for Quixotry. It was my eye that detected the probability of the drawing, not his. He had indeed failed; did not know his own business. Why put a premium on ineptitude? No, a present of, say, ten pounds at the most would more than adequately meet the case.

Sleep still refusing to oblige me, I took a book of short stories and read one. Then I closed my eyes again, and again began to think about the dealer. Why (so my thoughts ran) send him ten pounds? It will only give him a wrong idea of his customers, none other of whom would be so fair, so sporting, as I. He will expect similar letters every day and be disappointed, and then

he will become embittered and go down the vale of tears a miserable creature. He looked a nice old man too; a pity, nay a crime, to injure such a nature. No, ten pounds is absurd. Five would be plenty. Ten would put him above himself.

While I was dressing the next morning I thought about the dealer again. Why should I (so my thoughts ran), directly I had for the first time in my life brought off a financial *coup*, spoil it by giving a large part of the profit away? Was not that flying in the face of the Goddess of Business, whoever she may be? Was it not asking her to disregard me—only a day or so after we had at last got on terms? There is no fury like a woman scorned; it would probably be the end of me. City magnates are successful probably just because they don't do these foolish impulsive things. Impulse is the negation of magnatism. If I am to make any kind of figure in this new role of fine-art-speculator (so my thoughts continued) I must control my feelings. No, five pounds is absurd. A *douceur* of one pound will meet the case. It will be nothing to me—or, at any rate, nothing serious—but a gift of quail and manna from a clear sky to the dealer, without, however, doing him any harm. A pound will be ample, accompanied by a brief note.

The note was to the effect that I had sold the drawing at a profit which enabled me to make him a present, because it was an old, and perhaps odd, belief of mine that one should do this kind of thing; good luck should be shared.

I had the envelope in my pocket, containing the note and the cheque when I reached the club for lunch; and that afternoon I played bridge so disastrously that I was glad I had not posted it.

After all (so my thoughts ran, as I destroyed the envelope and contents) such bargains are all part of the

game. Buying and selling are a perfectly straightforward matter between dealer and customer. The dealer asks as much as he thinks he can extort, and the customer, having paid it, is under no obligation whatever to the dealer. The incident is closed.

E. V. Lucas—*The Phantom Journal.*

ON THE PLEASURES OF NO LONGER BEING VERY YOUNG

THERE are advantages in the advance through middle age into later life which are very seldom stated in a sensible way. Generally, they are stated in a sentimental way; in a general suggestion that all old men are equipped with beautiful snowy beards like Father Christmas and rejoice in unfathomable wisdom like Nestor. All this has caused the young people to be sceptical about the real advantages of the old people, and the true statement of those advantages sounds like a paradox. I would not say that old men grow wise, for men never grow wise; and many old men retain a very attractive childishness and cheerful innocence. Elderly people are often much more romantic than younger people, and sometimes even more adventurous, having begun to realize how many things they do not know. It is a true proverb, no doubt, which says, "There is no fool like an old fool." Perhaps there is no fool who is half so happy in his own fool's paradise. But, however this may be, it is true that the advantages of maturity are not those which are generally urged even in praise of it, and when they are truly urged they sound like an almost comic contradiction.

For instance, one pleasure attached to growing older is that many things seem to be growing younger; growing fresher and more lively than we once supposed them to be. We begin to see significance, or (in other words) to see life, in a large number of traditions, institutions, maxims, and codes of manners that seem in our first days

actually finding it difficult to be industrial, while the old agricultural countries still find it possible to be industrious. Now, I do not pretend to have prophesied or expected this, for a man may cheerfully call a thing rotten without really expecting it to rot. But neither, certainly, did the young, the progressive, the prosperous, or the adventurous expect it. Yet all history and culture is stiff with proverbs and prophecies telling them to expect it. The trouble is that they thought the proverbs and history a great deal too stiff. Again and again, with monotonous reiteration, both my young friends and myself had been told from childhood that fortune is fickle, that riches take to themselves wings and fly, that power can depart suddenly from the powerful, that pride goes before a fall, and insolence attracts the thunderbolt of the gods. But it was all unmeaning to us, and all the proverbs seemed stiff and stale, like dusty labels on neglected antiquities. We had heard of the fall of Wolsey, which was like the crash of a huge palace, still faintly rumbling through the ages; we had read of it in the words of Shakespeare, which possibly were not written by Shakespeare; we had learned them and learned nothing from them. We had read ten thousand times to the point of tedium, of the difference between the Napoleon of Marengo and the Napoleon of Moscow; but we should never have expected Moscow if we had been looking at Marengo. We knew that Charles the Fifth resigned his crown, or that Charles the First lost his head; and we should have duly remarked "*Sic transit gloria mundi*," after the incident, but not before it. We had been told that the Roman Empire declined, or that the Spanish Empire disintegrated; but no German ever really applied it to the German Empire, and no Briton to the British Empire. The very repetition of these truths will sound like the old interminable repetition of

the truisms. And yet they are to me, at this moment, like amazing and startling discoveries, for I have lived to see the dead proverbs come alive.

This, like so many of the realizations of later life, is quite impossible to convey in words to anybody who has not reached it in this way. It is like a difference of dimension or plane, in which something which the young have long looked at, rather wearily, as a diagram has suddenly become a solid. It is like the indescribable transition from the inorganic to the organic; as if the stone snakes and birds of some ancient Egyptian inscription began to leap about like living things. The thing was a dead maxim when we were alive with youth. It becomes a living maxim when we are nearer to death. Even as we are dying, the whole world is coming to life.

Another paradox is this: that it is not the young people who realize the new world. The moderns do not realize modernity. They have never known anything else. They have stepped on to a moving platform which they hardly know to be moving, as a man cannot feel the daily movement of the earth. But he would feel it sharp enough if the earth suddenly moved the other way. The older generation consists of those who do remember a time when the world moved the other way. They do feel sharply and clearly the epoch which is beginning, for they were there before it began. It is one of the artistic advantages of the aged that they do see the new things relieved sharply against a background, their shape definite and distinct. To the young these new things are often themselves the background, and are hardly seen at all. Hence, even the most intelligent of innovators is often strangely mistaken about the nature of innovation and the things that are really new. And the Oldest Inhabitant will often indulge in a senile chuckle, as he listens to the Village Orator proclaiming

that the village church will soon be swept away and replaced by a factory for chemicals. For the Oldest Inhabitant knows very well that nobody went to church in the days of his childhood except out of snobbishness, and that it is in his old age that the church has begun once more to be thronged with believers. In my capacity of Oldest Inhabitant (with senile chuckle), I will give one instance of a kindred kind. A man must be at least as old as I am in order to remember how utterly idiotic, inconceivable, and crazily incredible it once seemed that any educated or even reasonably shrewd person should confess that he believed in *ghosts*. You must be nearly the Oldest Inhabitant to know with what solid scorn and certainty the squire and the parson denied the possibility of the village ghost; the parson even more emphatically than the squire. The village ghost was instantly traced to the village drunkard or the village liar. Educated people *knew* that the dead do not return in the world of sense. Those who remember those times, and have lived to see a man of science like Sir Oliver Lodge founding quite a fashionable religion, are amused to hear a young man say the world is moving away from the supernatural. They know in what direction it has really moved.

G. K. Chesterton—*All Is Grist.*

ON THE "BUCOLICS" OF VIRGIL, A CAFÉ IN PARIS, THE LENGTH OF ESSAYS, PHŒBUS, BACCHUS, A WANTON MAID, AND OTHER MATTERS

A FRUITFUL subject for discussion in these days of war, foreign and civil, ruin, approaching pestilence, eclipse and veiling of the gods, is the proper place in which to read the *Bucolics* of the poet Virgil.

Some would suggest a pastoral scene—a rising mound near some clear river, or even the shade of a beech. Others a library brown with age, dusty, and (please God) all the windows shut; oaken also, the roof not high, the whole cut up into little compartments each with a wicket-gate as libraries should be. Others would suggest bed—though that connotes a complete acquaintance with the text. Others a railway journey, for on such an occasion the mind is well cut off from interference by modern things: that is, supposing the railway journey to be a fast one between two very distant points—for there is no more distracting passage of time than a journey in a slow train which stops at every station.

Others have suggested ship-board, which seems to me simply silly. For, apart from the difficulty of reading anything at sea, there is the gross unsuitability of time and place for the lovely lines of the Eclogues.

And so on. It is a weighty matter for discussion, and one that can never end, because it all turns upon an individual whim.

But for my part the place where I like to read the *Bucolics* of Virgil is at a table outside the door of a

certain café facing the Bourse in Paris; a table in the open air. The time of day in which this exercise most pleases me is about two o'clock of an early summer afternoon.

As to why this should be so, I cannot tell. Locke would explain it perhaps by his "Association of Ideas": but Locke is dead and gone. Perhaps once in boyhood, just in that place or in such a place, I first was struck by the beauty of such and such a line. At any rate, that is the place where now it pleases me to read the immortal stuff: a certain café opposite the Bourse in Paris, sitting at a table in the open air, in summer, with the book before me on a marble slab. There do I best receive within my mind (aided by a crib) the noble outlines of the Apennine, the Lombard Plain, the long shadows at evening, the bleating of the flock.

Some little way before me, as I read, the howling mob, which clamours all afternoon, buying and selling round the colonnade of the Bourse, continues its surge. Individual voices at that distance are lost; all you hear is the sea of human avarice and folly in its violence confused.

Why on earth this singular piece of baseness, the roar of men buying and selling and picking each other's pockets, should form a suitable background in my mind for the delicate notes of the pipe in the wood and the long regrets of the shepherds, heaven only knows. But so it is.

I wondered only this year as I re-read the heavenly poet in that place (opposite the Bourse in Paris, the Vile Stock Exchange) whether the advance of barbarism might not produce—and that in a very few years—a generation to whom all these lines will be as tedious as is Corneille to the educated Englishman of to-day.

I can imagine men still reasonably cultivated, still in

part acquainted with the Latin tongue, and yet fallen into such a degraded mood that only here and there some specially vivid picture or some piece of stronger rhetoric in the Eclogues shall touch them, while the rest will appear mechanical, dry stuff. For there is a degree of descent in the mind after which the magic of verse disappears; and that sacred quality whereby—none can tell how—a particular disposition of words stirs the mind in a fashion that is to common experience what music is to speech, and what colour is to form, no longer effects its purpose.

I was reading the other day in the work of a Colonial, whose amusing conceits we all properly admire and whose honest morals help to make his work pleasant, a most amazing judgment passed by him upon the poet Homer.

It seemed to him that the poet Homer did not write poetry at all. He said it sounded to him, compared with real poetry, modern poetry, live poetry (the Cad's Laureate, let us say), like the rude scratching of a savage knife upon a wall compared with some glorious work of art, such as a Coronation picture at the Royal Academy. . . . Well, well, well! . . .

Shall I attempt to criticize the Colonial? No, I will not.

The truth is, that when you come to criticize certain modern enormities your instrument fails. The thing is too big for you altogether.

You can pick up a cricket ball with your hand; you can handle a ten-foot spherical buoy with a crane. But how are you to deal with a rounded mass several miles across? How are we to deal with *mountains* of ineptitude? How is criticism to approach those last new literary moods which are deaf to the ancients? I fear it cannot deal with such moods at all. If a man feels

like that, he feels like that, and one can say no more And if there is to come a time when men shall read:

Incipe, parve puer, risu cognoscere matrem,

and make no more of it than "Passengers must cross the line by the bridge. Penalty £5," why, there it is! Things have their rising and their setting. But before that day comes may the earth cover me.

. . . .

If the modern world resembled that ancient one of which the echoes, as I lay down my Virgil, still move my mind, I should here complete, I should here end. For I have said all that I have to say. And a very good thing it would be if the modern world resembled the ancient world in this as in many other things. Their books were ten thousand words long, or twenty thousand words long, or fifty thousand words long, or a hundred thousand words long. They had not to conform to a special length. And so it was with that which they wrote down, as I am writing this, at random, a vagary of the mind.

But the modern world differs from the ancient world, and there is a law that an essay such as this (essay, forsooth!) should reach a certain length.

There are various ways in which I could pad it out. One of the best would be to quote you a few lines and ask you how you feel. For instance

Et me Phœbus amat: Phœbo sua semper apud me
Munera sunt, lauri et suave rubens hyacinthus.

This is not only a beautiful phrase, it is also true—and I am grateful to the Delian. I will do my best never to put him out. I will keep by me a few flowers for such a patron.

By the way, talking of that lovely couplet, do you know (it is true, it is not a lie, I have the very words before me as I write)—do you know that a gentleman still living translated that couplet thus: "Phœbus loves me and I in my turn have gifts for Phœbus—laurels, and the sweet blush of the hyacinth."

But this is not so wrong a rendering after all as that for which a contemporary of mine was once responsible in the noblest and most learned of the Oxford Colleges. For this man said (viva voce, it is true) that certain Greek lines which really meant "at evening soft dew descends upon the earth" signified in English, "Towards nightfall the huge female sea monster crawls up upon the sand." Each a picture; the one sweet, the other strong—but how different one from the other!

And as I have begun quoting, why not go on?

Malo me Galatea petit, lasciva puella,
Et fugit ad salices et se cupit ante videri.

You may, if you like, apply this to yourself just as I applied the first lines to myself. At any rate I will have nothing to do with them.

And really I can think of nothing more to say, and I must bring this to an end. . . . But as I write, but as I write, a stream comes down from the mountains, a girl escapes beyond the willow trees.

H. BELLOC—*On*.

THE CHOCOLATE BUS

I CANNOT help regretting the appearance of the chocolate bus in the streets of London. Not that I object to a bus of a new colour. On the contrary, I have long held that the motor bus is an unworthy successor to the old horse bus chiefly because the horse buses used to pour down Piccadilly in as many colours as you will find in a box of paints, while the motor buses scuttle along after one another in a wearisome monotony of red, as empty of personality as strings of mechanical lobsters (boiled ones). But, if it was necessary to introduce a new colour into the streets, the last of all the colours I would wish to see there is chocolate-brown. The one drawback to chocolate is its colour. Charming to the taste, it is dull to the eye. One would never eat it if one did not know from experience that it tastes better than it looks. It is, no doubt, in accordance with the great principle of compensation that runs through life that the birds of least brilliant colour sing the most brilliant songs, and that the sweetmeats of poorest favour should have the richest flavour. But a bus is neither a bird nor a sweetmeat, and should be painted red, yellow, orange, blue, green, indigo or violet.

Even so, it was not chiefly on account of its colour that I had a sense of grievance when I saw a chocolate bus the other day stealing for the first time along a route that takes me within a hundred yards of my door. I should have objected equally to a bus of any other colour in the circumstances. I have for some time past been doing my best not to ride in buses, and I have often

succeeded by the simple process of being excluded from their overcrowded and malodorous maws. I have said, with the other patient inhabitants of at least one suburb of London, "This is disgraceful," and have vowed a lifelong abstinence from bus-riding. But no sooner do I see a bus drawing up with a seat empty—or with a piece of floor-space empty—than my hand reaches out for it as a dipsomaniac's for a forbidden bottle, and, the next minute, I find myself as ever imprisoned in the Black Hole of the vehicle, rocking through the streets in an unnatural attitude, with vibrations beyond endurance entering my heels and jigging their way upwards through every bone till they reach my skull, which is only protected by my hat from the roof that bangs it sideways at every jolt. "This," I say to myself, as the bag I am carrying in my free hand lurches into the paper an ill-natured old gentleman is trying to read, "is life. This," I meditate, "is the civilization we Europeans are trying to spread over the world. This is the fulfilment of the dreams of the Greeks and the Romans and all the great civilizing races. To be bumped about in a bus—how unfortunate is the South Sea Islander, lolling lazily by his lagoon, to have missed so uplifting an experience! How melancholy is the lot of the Fijian, who walks from place to place, like a beast, instead of riding in the belly of a mechanical rhinoceros, like a man!" Thus I reflect, not without bitterness, as I actually pay money to the conductor for being allowed to squeeze myself into a place in which if a murderer or a bigamist were confined he would justly complain that prison life was being made intolerable. If gaol were anything like the inside of a motor bus with "standing-room for five only," no man, who was not either mad or a born criminal. would risk committing any offence likely to send him there. I can think of no more effective kind of prison

reform than to abolish the prisons and commit criminals to the insides of motor buses instead. Imagine what a sentence of " a month " would be in those circumstances. Hour after hour, day after day, to hang on to a rail and bump and sway and stagger and vibrate through one street that is duller than another, and another that is even duller than that—to be able to read nothing but advertisements of soaps and gas mantles and boot polish—never to feel the wind of heaven except in the form of a draught that is half dust and half other people's breathing—to be crowded with other human beings into a space into which one could not endure being crowded even with one's most admired friends—Dante might have included such a punishment among the torments of the *Inferno*. There is no advantage in it that I can think of, except that it takes you faster than you would otherwise go to some place or other that is not worth going to. That is why I would limit the use of the insides of motor buses to convicts. Did not the ancients punish criminals in a similar way by putting them in barrels filled with spikes and rolling them down a hill?

Having reached this point in my quarrel with motor buses, I may seem illogical in greeting so testily a new line of buses that should help to relieve the congestion. If I do so, however, I have a good enough reason. At the moment when the first chocolate bus appeared on my home route, I had just become so impatient of all motor buses that I had determined to learn to walk again—an art that I had almost forgotten. One day I actually did walk. I found it an exceedingly pleasant form of movement. There was a sort of natural rhythm in it. I no longer felt that I was being thrown about by some force infinitely more powerful than myself from one London borough to another. I could pad along as

gently as an old dog. I could amble at my ease like a hen picking up her dinner. I could stop whenever I liked at a shop-window and look at a case of eighteenth-century spoons, or at an array of Dundee cakes, or at a travelling-trunk that I would like to buy if I had the money to travel, or at the picture on the wrapper of Miss Ethel Dell's new novel, or at a necklace of pearls that I would sell if somebody gave it to me, or at the price-tickets on the plums and the celery at a greengrocer's. Even this, however, is only a small part of the pleasure of walking when one might be riding on a motor bus. The greatest pleasure of all is to realize that there is no hurry, and to escape from this universal folly of rushing at full speed to a place that is no better than the place one is at already. It is a law of nature that we must keep moving. The sheep in the field does it, the fly on the window-pane, the sparrow on the road. Everywhere living things are doomed to hop or dance or saunter in order that they may keep alive. But the movement that is necessary to live is not movement from one place to another; it is merely rhythmical exercise of wing or limb, with no vulgar object of arriving anywhere in particular. The gnats that swing up and down in an elastic cloud are not bent upon going anywhere. I doubt if they are even looking for something to eat. It is merely that they know by instinct that it is more pleasant to keep eternally moving like the planets than to sit still like a heap of stones. Man is the only one of the animals that has attempted to escape from this perpetual round of motion, and to stiffen into stillness while he is yet neither a cripple nor dead. He desires to go somewhere else than where he is, but he does not desire to move. Hence, in his cunning, he has invented means after means of being moved. He has abandoned activity for passivity till he has almost achieved his ideal of being

hurried to some unimportant destination like one of a heap of paving-stones rattled along in a truck in the wake of a traction-engine.

He reached this extreme of passivity only by slow stages. He began by mastering the more pliable animals and compelling them to carry him. While he rode on horseback, however, he may be said to have exchanged one kind of motion for another. The rider is still active in his movements; his muscles tighten and loosen in as musical a rhythm as the rhythm of walking. He has become a centaur instead of a man. Similarly, in the invention of the rowing-boat, man simply increased the range of his rhythms. He came nearer his ideal of being moved instead of moving with the invention of wheels and sails. He rejoiced as he freed his muscles from the delights of effort, but even then he experienced exquisite and subtle pleasures of movement in slackening and tightening reins, and in the skilful use of helm and sail. His temptation to idleness increased as vehicles and ships grew in size. He no longer wished to drive or to manage the boat. He was content to be driven by a horse that he himself did not know how to drive, and to use a ship as a travelling bed-sitting-room. This indolence of his gave men of mechanical minds their chance. Seeing what a lazy creature was man, they invented railways and ocean liners and charabancs and motor buses and underground tubes in which they could transport the poor creature in bulk endlessly from place to place, without the slightest effort on his part, except that of putting his hand in his pocket and bringing out money to pay for his ticket. So that at the present day the human race is becoming in ever a greater and greater degree a race of passengers. Could anything look less like a happy flock of jackdaws or an ecstatic dance of gnats than the mob of human beings that we see jumbled together to-

day in an underground train? They are shaken as you might jingle the money in your pocket, but they do not move. They are in a hurry, but the beauty of swiftness does not course through their beings. Set on the loveliest of the planets, with streams flowing, with a pearly moon rolling across the daylight sky, with birds singing in the trees, with children romping under them, they neglect all this noble spectacle amid which they were meant to loll or to labour in order to shut themselves inside a lighted box on wheels, and to be borne at top speed through the dull viewlessness of the underworld. And the motor bus, though it remains above ground, is a box on wheels that hurries the inside passenger through a world almost as unrefreshing to the eye. One has no more life, as one sits in it, than a posted letter. One's destination has become everything; one's journey to one's destination nothing—nothing, at any rate, but a necessary evil. This is against all wisdom, which bids us enjoy the journey no less than the end of the journey —which bids us keep moving, even if we are moving nowhere in particular.

If the human race, in abandoning the pleasures of physical movement, were finding compensation in new pleasures of the movement of mind or spirit, there would be more to be said in behalf of motor buses. But look at the map of the world, and you will search in vain for even a village in which there is evidence of any movement of mind or spirit such as filled all Italy with beauty four hundred years before the first motor bus had rattled human flesh and bones through the streets of London. Things being what they are, I wish the new chocolate bus every success. I shall most certainly use it. But I shall use it regretfully, thinking of all those fine walks I have been robbed of under the plane-trees with their spiky green balls of fruit—past booksellers' and jewel-

lers' and fruiterers' and tobacconists' shops and pawnbrokers' with their honourable and ancient sign.

ROBERT LYND—*Solomon In All His Glory.*

THE STUDENT

It is in the autumn that one used to puff oneself out with good resolutions about learning. One prepared to receive professors. With what pleasure one bought new books! One felt as if one were setting out on a journey. It is one of the great pleasures of a student's life to buy a heap of books at the beginning of the autumn. Here, he fancies, are all the secrets. An annotated Euripides, a text-book on natural philosophy, a book of logarithms, Morris's *Philology*, Maine's *Ancient Law*, the first book of *The Faëry Queene*, *Rasselas* with notes, Professor Gilbert Murray's *Greek Literature*, Mommsen, Cruttwell, the *Histories* of Tacitus in a red binding—he opens each of them impartially with pleasure; he enjoys the very "feel" of the paper, the smoothness or roughness of the covers, the look of the title-page. He could hardly relish them more if they were things with a sweet smell or taste. That at least is the experience of one who always loved his books to be new and shrank from getting them second-hand as one would shrink from a sweetmeat that had first been in somebody else's mouth. The fresh, white pages that no thumb had sullied attracted me possibly as a symbol of a new beginning, a dawn, a spring. Now I would rise from my past as from sleep, put on "the new man," as the preachers say, and set out on a career of tireless discovery. I would plunge into the beautiful waters of learning and emerge a scholar. I would study even sound in the physics room, for sound was in some way related to Schubert, and to master all that dull prose about vibrations and the

length of organ-pipes might be an initiation into the deeper mysteries of music. The truth is, every subject was a hill to climb, and any hill was better than no hill. I felt a certain excitement as I read *The University Calendar* and came on the courses even in strange subjects such as engineering and political economy. I could fancy myself with the greatest of ease a civil engineer and an architect, even though algebraic formulæ meant less to me than the marks left by the feet of seagulls on the sand, and though I could hardly draw a house correctly enough to distinguish it from a beehive. The sense of my ignorance and incapacity did not daunt me in those days. I regarded these as remediable weaknesses. I accepted the world as a great lucky-tub into which, did I but dip earnestly enough, I could find whatever talent I desired. How often did I seriously consider the possibility of becoming a sculptor or a composer! I felt that if I began to handle the clay with all my might it would take shape from some of those restless dreams and cravings that made it so delightful to be idle to-day and promised to come to birth in something real and beautiful to-morrow. As for turning composer, my inability to play any musical instrument did not chill my hopes on an evening on which I had heard *Adelaïde* or the "Prize Song" in the *Meistersingers* sung. Here was a world into which to break through—why not break through into it? I read somewhere that Schumann did not learn to play the piano till he was in his twenties. He even had some sort of operation on his fingers, did he not? in order to rid them of the stiffness of maturity. Could I not do the same? Alas, three consecutive evenings of five-finger exercises cured me of my dream of becoming a second Schumann. Not beauty, but tedium, lay that way. For knowledge of music, I had to content myself with Grove's Dictionary.

There are some students who, fortunately or unfortunately for themselves, have none of these illicit longings for impossible careers. They have not a single feather in their heads. They seem to decide what they are going to be on the day on which they leave school, and to take nothing seriously that does not lead them straight to the Church, the Bar or the Civil Service. There are others who for the moment do not decide upon any career save the career of examinations. They take upon themselves the routine of the year's work and would regard any mental effort made outside the beaten track as wasted energy. They would regard it as frivolous to read Gibbon if Dr. William Smith falls in more aptly with their course of studies. Literature is to them a subject, not a delight. They regard Aristophanes not as amusing, but as a collection of answers to examination questions. Æschylus is not a poet, but a huge pudding of variant readings. Everything is of value, not in so far as it answers questions put by one's own nature, but in so far as it can answer questions likely to be put by an examiner's ingenuity. This type of student is, I believe, disappearing; the modern theory of education discourages him. It is not very long, however, since he was the ideal of the professors and schoolmasters. They loved him because his virtues were so measurable. He was told to collect a certain number of facts, and the success with which he did his work could be appraised at a glance. At the same time, we must not think that the professors and schoolmasters were only consulting their ease in idealizing this kind of student. His success did involve certain necessary virtues—obedience, thoroughness, self-discipline, the cultivation of the organizing faculty. On the other hand, it implied such an economy of curiosity and imagination that these were frequently atrophied from disuse. He was more likely to achieve a

successful career than a successful life. I knew a student of this kind who never read a single book—either as a schoolboy or as an undergraduate—that did not bear directly on an examination. He shunned Pater as he did *Tit-Bits*. Wordsworth, like *Comic Cuts*, was, for him, reading for idlers. He had a brilliant career, and ended in a high position in the Civil Service, and I cannot deny that he always seemed perfectly happy. But it is a question worth debating whether, if he had been less successfully educated, he might not have been a better educated man. He had a good mechanism for learning rather than a mind. Were all men educated on the same pattern as he, we should have a fine race of officials so far as the routine of officialism is concerned, but no inventors, no statesmen of imagination, no poets, no leaders. It was probably of the over-disciplined, over-routined student that Professor Laurie was thinking when he pleaded with the richer sort of parents to throw their children sufficiently on their own resources, to give them "some of the advantages of the gutter." Many people, on the other hand, are nowadays almost too devotedly in love with the gutter as the school of originality. They imagine you have only to set an infant or a young man carefully in the gutter in order to release a wealth of fine impulses that will save him both in this world and the next. The truth is, education should be neither all formalism and routine, nor all an affair of desultory impulses. Here, as elsewhere, discipline and indiscipline must balance one another, and the result will be better than a monopoly of either. Reading Professor John Adams's admirable book, *The Student's Guide*, I cannot help thinking with envy of the student who can subject himself to system even to the point of beginning his work with the subject he likes least and of knowing to within five minutes how long he will spend each evening

on each subject. The picture of the ideal student rises in my mind as I read: I see him trampling on irrelevant day-dreams, and submitting himself to obedience through the impulse towards mastery. I remember how, for myself, I studied as an Epicurean. But I always regarded the ideal student as an ascetic, and I never luxuriated more blissfully in Epicureanism than when I was dreaming I was an ascetic myself.

Thus, as a student, one had two dreams. One had the dream of getting knowledge, and one had the dream of getting character. The night-watches were pleasant with the thought of making oneself a master of both. One went to sleep in a cloud of ambition. But in the morning Epicurus prevailed again. There would be someone in the porch of the college who would meet me in an idle mood and insist on a walk along the tow-path of a canal or who had been reading a book and wanted to argue that no one existed except himself, or who believed that Thoreau was a better writer than Emerson, or that *The Shop Girl* was a better musical comedy than *The Geisha*. There was always some good reason for ignoring Latin and for passing by logic on the other side. Those were still the days of the æsthetic period, and one could, with a good conscience, prefer the shadows of the willow-trees in the olive-green waters of the canal to the dreary humour of Plautus—at least, of Plautus studied, like a corpse, in small sections, and with an eye to his grammar rather than to his jokes. . . . One certainly would not for anything have missed one's student days. To mix with other students is an education in itself. It is to come into touch with ideas that are "living creatures having hands and feet." One may leave their society, ignorant of "why peninsulas more frequently turn southward than northward, why the jute industry settled down in Dundee"; but one

becomes in their company a citizen of a larger world, a sharer in the world's interests, one who is liberated at least into the atmosphere of great traditions. Thus does every man attempt to find arguments in favour of the education he himself has had. The man who has had a University education believes it is the only education worth having. The man who is self-educated believes in self-education as the secret of success. The man who idled at college explains what a blessing his idleness has been to him. The man who has read his eyes out praises God for his labours. Thus, when we look back, we all turn out to have been model students. . . . At the same time, if one had it all to do over again, how eagerly one would consult the pages of Professor Adams for good advice! How one would plunge into an enthusiasm for work! And—how one would find oneself the next morning far from the droning lecture-room, smoking a pipe of Navy Cut and discussing the immortality of the soul under the blackening elms of the Botanic Gardens!

Robert Lynd—*Solomon In All His Glory.*

PLEASURES

We have heard a great deal, since 1914, about the things which are a menace to civilization. First it was Prussian militarism; then the Germans at large; then the prolongation of the war; then the shortening of the same; then, after a time, the Treaty of Versailles; then French militarism—with, all the while, a running accompaniment of such minor menaces as Prohibition, Lord Northcliffe, Mr. Bryan, Comstockery . . .

Civilization, however, has resisted the combined attacks of these enemies wonderfully well. For still, in 1923, it stands not so very far from where it stood in that "giant age before the flood" of nine years since. Where, in relation to Neanderthal on the one hand and Athens on the other, where precisely it stood *then* is a question which each may answer according to his taste. The important fact is that these menaces to our civilization, such as it is—menaces including the largest war and the stupidest peace known to history—have confined themselves in most places and up till now to mere threats, barking more furiously than they bite.

No, the dangers which confront our civilization are not so much the external dangers—wild men, wars and the bankruptcy that wars bring after them. The most alarming dangers are those which menace it from within, that threaten the mind rather than the body and estate of contemporary man.

Of all the various poisons which modern civilization, by a process of auto-intoxication, brews quietly up within its own bowels, few, it seems to me, are more deadly

(while none appears more harmless) than that curious and appalling thing that is technically known as "pleasure." "Pleasure" (I place the word between inverted commas to show that I mean, not real pleasure, but the organized activities officially known by the same name) "pleasure"—what nightmare visions the word evokes! Like every man of sense and good feeling, I abominate work. But I would rather put in eight hours a day at a Government office than be condemned to lead a life of "pleasure"; I would even, I believe, prefer to write a million words of journalism a year.

The horrors of modern "pleasure" arise from the fact that every kind of organized distraction tends to become progressively more and more imbecile. There was a time when people indulged themselves with distractions requiring the expense of a certain intellectual effort. In the seventeenth century, for example, royal personages and their courtiers took a real delight in listening to erudite sermons (Dr. Donne's, for example) and academical disputes on points of theology or metaphysics. Part of the entertainment offered to the Prince Palatine, on the occasion of his marriage with James I's daughter, was a syllogistic argumentation, on I forget what philosophical theme, between the amiable Lord Keeper Williams and a troop of minor Cambridge logicians. Imagine the feelings of a contemporary prince, if a loyal University were to offer him a similar entertainment!

Royal personages were not the only people who enjoyed intelligent pleasures. In Elizabethan times every lady and gentleman of ordinary culture could be relied upon, at demand, to take his or her part in a madrigal or a motet. Those who know the enormous complexity and subtlety of sixteenth-century music will realize what this means. To indulge in their favourite

pastime our ancestors had to exert their minds to an uncommon degree. Even the uneducated vulgar delighted in pleasures requiring the exercise of a certain intelligence, individuality and personal initiative. They listened, for example, to *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet* —apparently with enjoyment and comprehension. They sang and made much music. And far away, in the remote country, the peasants, year by year, went through the traditional rites—the dances of spring and summer, the winter mummings, the ceremonies of harvest home —appropriate to each successive season. Their pleasures were intelligent and alive, and it was they who, by their own efforts, entertained themselves.

We have changed all that. In place of the old pleasures demanding intelligence and personal initiative, we have vast organizations that provide us with ready-made distractions—distractions which demand from pleasure-seekers no personal participation and no intellectual effort of any sort. To the interminable democracies of the world a million cinemas bring the same stale balderdash. There have always been fourth-rate writers and dramatists; but their works, in the past, quickly died without getting beyond the boundaries of the city or the country in which they appeared. To-day, the inventions of the scenario-writer go out from Los Angeles across the whole world. Countless audiences soak passively in the tepid bath of nonsense. No mental effort is demanded of them, no participation; they need only sit and keep their eyes open.

Do the democracies want music? In the old days they would have made it themselves. Now, they merely turn on the gramophone. Or if they are a little more up-to-date they adjust their wireless telephone to the right wave-length and listen-in to the fruity contralto at Marconi House, singing "The Gleaner's Slumber Song."

And if they want literature, there is the Press. Nominally, it is true, the Press exists to impart information. But its real function is to provide, like the cinema, a distraction which shall occupy the mind without demanding of it the slightest effort or the fatigue of a single thought. This function, it must be admitted, it fulfils with an extraordinary success. It is possible to go on for years and years, reading two papers every working day and one on Sundays without ever once being called upon to think or to make any other effort than to move the eyes, not very attentively, down the printed column.

Certain sections of the community still practise athletic sports in which individual participation is demanded. Great numbers of the middle and upper classes play golf and tennis in person and, if they are sufficiently rich, shoot birds and pursue the fox and go ski-ing in the Alps. But the vast mass of the community has now come even to sport vicariously, preferring the watching of football to the fatigues and dangers of the actual game. All classes, it is true, still dance; but dance, all the world over, the same steps to the same tunes. The dance has been scrupulously sterilized of any local or personal individuality.

These effortless pleasures, these ready-made distractions that are the same for everyone over the face of the whole Western world, are surely a worse menace to our civilization than ever the Germans were. The working hours of the day are already, for the great majority of human beings, occupied in the performance of purely mechanical tasks in which no mental effort, no individuality, no initiative are required. And now, in the hours of leisure, we turn to distractions as mechanically stereotyped and demanding as little intelligence and initiative as does our work. Add such leisure to such

work and the sum is a perfect day which it is a blessed relief to come to the end of.

Self-poisoned in this fashion, civilization looks as though it might easily decline into a kind of premature senility. With a mind almost atrophied by lack of use, unable to entertain itself and grown so wearily uninterested in the ready-made distractions offered from without that nothing but the grossest stimulants of an ever-increasing violence and crudity can move it, the democracy of the future will sicken of a chronic and mortal boredom. It will go, perhaps, the way the Romans went: the Romans who came at last to lose, precisely as we are doing now, the capacity to distract themselves; the Romans who, like us, lived on ready-made entertainments in which they had no participation. Their deadly ennui demanded ever more gladiators, more tightrope-walking elephants, more rare and far-fetched animals to be slaughtered. Ours would demand no less; but owing to the existence of a few idealists, doesn't get all it asks for. The most violent forms of entertainment can only be obtained illicitly; to satisfy a taste for slaughter and cruelty you must become a member of the Ku Klux Klan. Let us not despair, however; we may still live to see blood flowing across the stage of the Hippodrome. The force of a boredom clamouring to be alleviated may yet prove too much for the idealists.

ALDOUS HUXLEY—*On the Margin.*

IN CRIMSON SILK

You will probably declare roundly that I ought not to have bought them in the first place. But I regret nothing. I realize, even better than you do, that there was, of course, no sense in the affair. Whoever crimson silk pyjamas are intended for, they are certainly not intended for me. I am not the kind of man who robes himself sumptuously in the night watches, and for years now I have crept to my bed or down to the bath-room in the demurest shades, the most self-effacing of pale blue stripes. My friends, men of a not always happy candour, have told me more than once that I look as if I sleep in my clothes, and I have no doubt that I look even dingier at night than I do during the day. Probably if they saw me in my pyjamas they would say that I looked as if I had spent all day in them. But not only were these gorgeous red things obviously not the kind of pyjamas I usually wear, they were also quite superfluous because I had no need of another pair. An extra suit of pyjamas, of course, will always—as people say—"come in," but you could hardly imagine these opulent, regal garments merely coming in, wistfully awaiting their turn at the bottom of a drawer. Emphatically their purchase cannot be justified by common sense, but considered, as it should be considered, as a romantic gesture, a wave of defiance to the greyness and dullness of things, it was, I think, by no means contemptible.

It was a grey day, had been indeed a grey week; nothing outside the day's routine had happened for some

time; and it did not look as if anything would ever happen again. My body had gone on dressing and undressing itself, eating, drinking, smoking, pushing itself into buses and trains, floundering heavily into large chairs, had gone, in short, through all its little repertoire of tricks; but the rest of me, mind, spirit or soul, appeared to be on the point of hibernating. There I was then, going about my business drearily this grey morning, when suddenly in passing a shop window I caught sight of a pair of crimson silk pyjamas, or rather of flame and treasure and lost sunsets, the gorgeous East in fee. They were not things meekly soliciting in a shop window, but an event, a challenge, a blast of sartorial trumpets. The sun and the wind, the stars in their courses, had conspired together to produce a world of dirty monochrome, in which nothing could possibly happen, and we had all weakly bowed to their decision with one grand exception, the gentlemen's outfitters, who realizing that their moment had arrived, made a gesture of defiance and evolved these pyjamas, to burn there, ruby-red. I knew at once that my own moment had also arrived. There are occasions in a man's existence when he must make something happen, must fling a splash of colour into his life, or some part of him, perhaps the boy in him, will perish, flying broken before the grey armies of age, timidity or boredom.

These are brave words, but candour compels me to add that if the shopman had even flicked a derisive eyelid when I inquired about those pyjamas, they would never have been mine. I am prepared to stand facing the dark tide of circumstance, making romantic gestures of defiance, but I am not prepared to stand before a counter looking a fool. However, I never saw the faintest tremor. His manner instantly set me at ease, for he produced the pyjamas with that air of grave approval, as if to say,

"It is not for me to comment on your admirable taste, sir, but it is evident that you and I think alike on these matters," that air which is the secret of all old and expensive shops. He spread the crimson bravery on the counter, lovingly fingered the material, pointed out this and that, and then mentioned the price, a figure by no means unworthy of that regal magnificence, mentioned it as a mere after-thought, a curious little fact that might possibly interest me. I said I would take them along myself, and watched him fold them away into a neat paper package. For the remainder of that morning I might have been seen as a dullish solid-looking citizen clutching a small and apparently uninteresting parcel. In reality I was a kind of wild poet who had just had one adventure and would have another at the day's end, who carried with him through all the city's grey tides some night robes as vivid as a sunset, spoil of Tyre and Sidon.

My other adventure was, of course, putting them on that night. That was three days ago, but even now there is still some faint thrill in going to bed or waking in the morning, for naturally I have been enjoying my appearance in an entirely new part. Clad in crimson silk, I feel a very different person, my thoughts adapting themselves to my outward magnificence. As I survey my lustrous blood-red length at night, as I wake in the morning to see two arms that might have come from a pagoda in festival stretching before me, another personality is super-imposed upon the one I know so well. I feel a wicked luxurious fellow, with Nubian slaves, a torture chamber, and a huddle of shrinking Circassian beauties, round the corner. If I had to speak, I should do it in King Cambyses's vein. I am hand in glove with the Borgias. I enjoy the thought that the poor and honest are suffering, and am all for whipping the dogs.

Strong, ruthless, beautiful, I stand high above common morality and look down with a cruel smile upon the whimpering herd. Men are my counters, women my playthings, and I own no god but myself. And then, having doffed or forgotten the pyjamas, I turn back again, dwindle if you will, into the rather timid, respectable and not unkindly citizen known to my family and friends.

The least thing, it would seem, will ring up the curtain on these mental histrionics. I have only to be given one of those enormous and very expensive cigars by means of which companies are merged and dividends declared, and immediately I find myself turning into a different person. The mouth through which this costly smoke slowly dribbles seems to expand and turn grim. I feel rich, powerful, rather cynical and sensual, one who looks with narrowed eyes at the poor virtuous fools of this world. But put me, in my shabby clothes, in the middle of a richly dressed and bejewelled company, and in a moment I am your stern moralist, your sturdy philosopher, piercing with one glance the hollow shams of life. While they are lighting their cigars (brigands and zanies all of them), I am smoking the honest pipe of Thomas Carlyle and telling them under my breath that it shall not avail them. Yet I have only to have a Turkish cigarette and a suspicion that the lady beside me (who probably mistakes me for someone else) thinks I am a witty dog, a clever trifler, and there I am, airy, exquisite, now slightly wistful, now mocking, epigrammatizing the world away. But let a genuine fellow of this breed, with a more rapid and heartless flow of epigrams and more superbly creased trousers (for you must have well-creased trousers for this part, and that is one reason why I, who bag dreadfully, can rarely play it), let one of these fellows join us and within a minute

or so I have changed again, being now simpler, deeper, more kindly, none of your mere witty triflers but a man with a heart and a brain and a purpose, whose lightest word is worth more than a bushel of epigrams and cheap wit. Thus can cigar, pipe or cigarette play Puck with my personality, wandering dazed in its midsummer wood. Small wonder that a suit of crimson silk should be so potent.

When I consider these and similar drolleries of the mind, for ever ransacking its wardrobes and lumber rooms and dressing up for charades, I wonder more and more at the loud intolerant persons we know so well, who have doubted nothing for years, so supremely confident of knowing all truth and virtue that they are ready, nay, eager to show their fellow creatures the rope and gallows for a word or a gesture. Are they of different stuff from me, made all of a piece? Do they never find their personalities, or at least some part of them, veering with the wind of circumstance? Does nothing ever change their point of view, at least in the secret conclaves of the mind? Have they never discovered any touch of the theatre and the masquerade in the day's grave fooling? If so—and we can never know—then there is some excuse for their amazing confidence in their infallibility, their refusal to be tolerant of any difference in minds. But is it that they are not more but less stable than most of us are, that they are not acting half-a-hundred different parts for a few odd minutes and taking pleasure in the absurd transformations, but are solemnly play-acting all the time, desperately keeping the outward appearance of one consistent character? Perhaps, unknown to us, they are wearing their crimson silk day and night.

J. B. Priestley—*Open House.*

INVITATION TO THE WAR

WORRY about words, Bobby. Your grandmother is right. For, whatever else you may do, you will be using words always. All day and every day, words matter. Though you live in a barrel and speak to nobody but yourself, words matter. For words are the tools of thought, and you will find often that you are thinking badly because you are using the wrong tools, trying to bore a hole with a screw-driver, or draw a cork with a coal-hammer.[1]

Excited persons will tell you—and are telling you now—that you must be "air-minded." No doubt, at the moment, they are right. But flying is only the last, and, I suspect, the least interesting, of numerous methods of locomotion. The birds have had it for a long time; and it is not important. We catch and keep the birds in cages, not because they fly but because they sing. Before you die the aeroplane may be as out of date as the rickshaw is to-day. But words will still matter; and your capacity for thought and speech will still be the only quality that keeps you out of the Zoo.

The power and pleasure of words are enduring, and can be enjoyed by all men. They are not the privilege of wealth or intellect or costly education; and they do not suddenly perish, like last year's motor-car or foxtrot. They are not the monopoly of writers, lovers of literature, or lawyers. Every trade and every profession

[1] " A great man said long ago that most of the controversies in the world would end as soon as they began if men would only start by defining their terms." (Lord Hewart, in the *Sunday Times*.)

is conducted with words. The English language, like the right of criticism, belongs to every subject. And so we might expect that the same authorities which urge you to get "air-mindedness" and "road-sense" and "hygiene-awareness" and "civic spirit" would beg you sometimes to think about your words, to respect and treasure the language of the race, which you are using, changing, enriching, or damaging every hour of every day. Such exhortations are seldom heard; and it is not surprising that most of us choose and use our words with no more thought than we give to respiration, fondly supposing that it is as easy and natural to speak the English language as it is to breathe the English air. But I, though I have no particular title nor aptitude for the affair and am in error as frequently as you, exhort you boldly in the nation's name to worry about words, to have an affection and a respect and a curiosity for words, to keep a dictionary in the home and ask yourself often: "Now, why do I say that?" I am not urging you to be always right: for few can hope for that. But we all can worry; and that is the beginning of virtue.

It is not, I warn you, Bobby, a comfortable estate to be of those who worry about words. When I have read a few columns in Mr. H. W. Fowler's *Modern English Usage* I feel that I shall never dare to put pen to paper again. They are much happier who can read without a twinge Mr. Brown's complaint that Mr. Smith has "sabotaged the Peace issue" and pass on contentedly to the next column, in which Mr. Robinson tells us that the M.C.C. "have finalized the body-line issue." We know, we must admit, or very nearly know, what Mr. Brown and Mr. Robinson mean, and therefore, we admit, we might be content. For if we understand clearly the signals of a policeman we do not think of complaining that his movements are not graceful (though, by the

way, they generally are). And it may be said that, the chief purpose of words being to convey meaning, to transfer thought, if that is done efficiently there is no cause of complaint. But though the chief purpose of a motor-car is to convey or transfer bodies, those who manufacture, market, and purchase it use increasing care to secure that it shall be elegant and graceful as well; and in like fashion we think it right to go on worrying about words, however much it wearies ourselves or others.

I declare a new and ruthless Word War; and I invite all lovers of good words to buckle on their dictionaries and enter the fight, whether on our side or against us. We shall often, we know, become casualties (what a phrase!) ourselves, but this will make us fight more carefully and not less keenly. So, brothers, lay on!

Piratical, ruffianly, masked, braggart, and ill-bred words invade our language and lay waste our thought every day. I am not, brothers, in a superior manner, distributing blame to those who use these unseemly expressions. Nay, I have a Christian understanding of the real cause of offence, which is that those who use the most numerous words in public—that is, politicians and journalists—have the least time in which to choose their words. The Cabinet Minister who speaks for an hour or more in the House of Commons (interrupted from time to time) cannot be expected to make every sentence perfectly obedient to the laws of elegance or even grammar; and when, after a long day in his Department and the House, he comes to a public dinner the wonder is that so often he speaks so entertainingly and well.

The special reporter or dramatic critic, writing with one foot in the telephone-box—and two minutes to go—

and even, in a crisis, the leader-writer, have the same defence. The orator on the soap-box, back to the wall, has no time to polish his retorts to the shower of abuse or cabbage-stalks which he has drawn upon himself, and from his excited mind emerges easily some parrot-phrase about "sabotaging the Peace issue," "not deviating from an attitude," "implementing a pre-obligation," or "liquidating a situation."

But though we are Christians we must be just and firm, we lonely fighters in the Word War. Without condemning any individual we can throw such odium upon the offensive *words* that they will cease to come naturally to any pen or tongue. The mind of the orator, however many cabbages fly round his head, will unconsciously reject these inelegant weapons, as, in most cases, it would refuse to discharge an indecent or blasphemous reply.

But how is this to be brought about? Very simply. Indeed, the machinery exists already. We poor professional writers receive by every other post advice and criticism from strangers, not only about what we say but about our manner of saying it—hyphens, split infinitives, relative causes, "if and when," etc. Sometimes the strangers are very wrong; but often they are right and helpful. In either case they show a healthy interest in the use of language and encourage care in the writer. I suggest that the same attention be paid to the language of politics and "public life" and journalism and business, in which more words are flung about in a single day than all the modern novelists by massed contemporaneous effort could distribute in a whole year. The late Prime Minister himself was criticized for the form as much as for the substance of certain speeches. Whether that was just or not we do not know (and it might be argued that some of the critics were heaving

boulders in a glass-house) but the principle was sound. If interruptions concerning petty points of policy are permissible at public meetings, let us from time to time have interventions in the great cause of words, thus:

SPEAKER: I say that by his speech at the Corn Exchange my opponent is deliberately sabotaging the Peace issue!

A VOICE: Why?

SPEAKER: Because the League of Nations——

INTERRUPTER: I meant "Why do you use such extraordinary language?"

SPEAKER: I use the language of Idealism, the language of Hope, the language of the toiling masses——

INTERRUPTER: No, you don't. The toiling masses have more sense. You use the language of a lunatic——

VOICES: Chuck him out!

SPEAKER: My policy, sir, is to consolidate the Peace front by mobilizing the forces of the Left on a collective-security-system basis——

INTERRUPTER: Your policy is admirable. I shall probably vote for you. But you are making a speech; and a speech is made of words; and your words are pestilent.

VOICES: Chuck him out!

INTERRUPTER: What exactly do you mean by "sabotage"? And can you sabotage an issue?

VOICES: Chuck him out!

INTERRUPTER: And what's all this nonsense about "Fronts"? I've noticed that the more peace-loving you are, some of you, the more you talk about Fronts and forces and militants and all that.

VOICES: Chuck him out!

INTERRUPTER: You mean, don't you, that you don't agree with your opponent about the best way to secure Peace?

SPEAKER: I do, sir.
INTERRUPTER: Then why the —— don't you say so?

I sympathize, I repeat, with the speaker. But it is expedient that he should suffer for the general good; and he may live to thank you.

Then there is the advertiser, who has much less excuse: for he has quiet and time, and his mischief is done deliberately. Write to him and tell him that his language offends you so much that you will not buy his goods. Tell the "stockist" who offers to "service" you that you prefer to deal with a simple fellow who is content to serve you. And be a nuisance in the home. Stop your mother (politely) when she says "literally," and ask her what she *means*. Interrupt them! Badger them! Write to them! Ask them what they *mean*! Let none of the wicked words escape without a challenge. When in doubt put them through the Entrance Examination in Appendix I. Make your dear family play the game of "Wicked Words." Attack me too if you will; but send me your own Black Lists and let us fight the Word War together. For together, brothers, we can do a great work for the English—or must we now say the British—language. And do not be afraid of being called a snob or a pedant. We are not attacking ignorance but inefficiency. Words are the tools of every trade, and there is nothing snobbish or pedantic in expecting everyone to know (or try to know) his job. It is not pedantic to bowl straight, nor is the Umpire snobbish when he says "Out!"

A. P. HERBERT—*What a Word!*

ELIA AFTER A HUNDRED YEARS

THE vogue of an author is dependent on the taste of the age, and even a classic is exposed to the variations of fashion. But what am I saying? In the same lifetime according to our age, in the same year according to our experience, sometimes at different hours of the same day, we prefer one book, one style, one mind to another. Lamb is a classic, but he is a little classic; and it is little classics who are, as a rule, most subject to fluctuations of appreciation. Yet in spite of four generations having come and gone, how high the *Essays of Elia* stand! It is the more remarkable because Lamb is an intimate, self-descriptive writer, since at no point is one generation more likely to differ from the next than about where the line of reserve ought to be drawn. It is this, by-the-by, that often makes communication between children and parents so difficult; they are shy or frank about different things. Thus what may appear to readers of one generation as winning trustfulness in an author, to a previous generation may have seemed spiritual indelicacy, or may seem to the next a lack of frankness. But Lamb wrote about himself so gracefully, so sincerely, that he has escaped criticism from both directions, though perhaps not entirely from those to-day who honour naked exposure and violently distrust the arts of amiability. Again, as far as style is concerned, though his graces are not those most in favour at the moment, the triumphs of his style are clear to all who understand the art of writing. It is a very bookish style; he has a very mannered manner. Lamb always writes as one to whom

words are a delight in themselves, and though no one cared more genuinely for the things he wrote about, joy lay for him in the *manner* of describing them. He is distinctly an art-for-art's-sake writer.

Once, when a friend objected to his love of archaic forms of speech, he stammered out that for his part he wrote for "antiquity." He could not bring himself to write a tame sentence; he could never resist a fine old word. He delighted in the vigour and quaintness of seventeenth-century English, and his mastery lay in using it to record homely, intimate experience. He acquired from the old writers whom he loved a lofty, fanciful way of treating trivial things. It became a second nature with him. His work is more full of exquisitely apt literary phrases than that of perhaps any other prose writer. It is quite unnecessary to add that he also stands high among English humorists, or that he is one of the great English sentimentalists—perhaps the best of them. His humour is the humour of sympathy, even when it takes the form of self-delighting extravagance. His sentiment is that of one who loves to share the little arts of happiness, to whom past things are peculiarly endeared because they are no more, who is content with "the most kindly and natural species of love," as he calls it, in the place of passion. And all this, visible in his work, is borne out by those who have examined his life. One and all, the nearer they have approached him the more they have loved him. Here lies, indeed, some danger for his reputation. People tire of being told how good and yet how human he was; how faithful though freakish; how bravely gay despite the tragedy which shadowed his life; how excusable his failings were and how right we are to forget them. Only Lamb himself could do full justice to the perverse impulse towards detraction such partiality, almost inevit-

able though it be, may chance to provoke in others. It is the sort of impulse he understood well himself. If you ever feel it, recall that one of the few occasions on which he showed a spurt of resentment was when Coleridge called him "gentle" in print; he would have been exasperated to find himself referred to as "St. Charles."

When Froude published Carlyle's *Reminiscences* few passages roused more indignation than its contemptuous comments upon Lamb. "A very sorry pair of phenomena," Carlyle wrote of Charles and Mary Lamb, recalling how he and Jane had visited them twice or thrice at Enfield: "Insuperable proclivity to *gin*, in poor old Lamb. His talk contemptibly small . . . , screwed into frosty artificialities, ghastly make-believe of wit;—in fact more like 'diluted insanity' (as I defined it) than anything of real jocosity, 'humour,' or geniality." This passage stirred Swinburne into writing two of his most vituperative sonnets on Carlyle, and in defence of one who had written, he said, "The brightest words wherein sweet wisdom smiled." I mention this literary episode because it is an example of the protective devotion Lamb's memory wakes, and partly because this passage, though written in one of Carlyle's most curmudgeonly moods, also contains phrases which make us *see* Lamb as he was shortly before he died, and incidentally touch the secret of his charm as a writer. "He was the *leanest* of mankind," Carlyle continues, "tiny black breeches buttoned to the kneecap and no farther, surmounting spindle-legs also in black, face and head fineish, black, bony, lean, and of a Jew type rather; in the eyes a kind of *smoky* brightness or confused sharpness; spoke with a stutter; in walking tottered and shuffled: emblem of imbecility bodily and spiritual (something of real *insanity* I have understood), and yet something too of humane, ingenuous, pathetic, sportfully much-endur-

ing." Carlyle, we forgive you for the sake of that phrase "sportfully much-enduring," which suggests that which attracts everyone who reads his life (in no book so faithfully and vividly reflected as in Mr. E. V. Lucas's fine biography). And also something that gives depth and poetry to even his lightest work—a dark deposit of a tragic tenderness which relieves the restless glitter of its gaiety.

"In his subtle capacity for enjoying the more refined points of earth, of human relationship, he could throw the gleam of poetry or humour on what seemed common or threadbare; has a care for the sighs, and the weary humdrum preoccupations of very weak people, down to their little pathetic 'gentilities,' even; while, in the purely human temper, he can write of death, almost like Shakespeare." So Walter Pater wrote of him.

How tempting to illustrate that! Yet if I begin to quote from, say, "New Year's Eve," where shall I stop? That Essay is like a piece of music which modulates from one mood into another, from gravest meditation into gay resentment. If I wrench a fragment from the middle of it, please remember also how it ends.

"In proportion as the years both lessen and shorten, I set more count upon their periods, and would fain lay my ineffectual finger upon the spoke of the great wheel. I am not content to pass away 'like a weaver's shuttle.' Those metaphors solace me not, nor sweeten the unpalatable draught of mortality. I care not to be carried with the tide, that smoothly bears human life to eternity; and reluct at the inevitable course of destiny. I am in love with this green earth; the face of town and country; the unspeakable rural solitudes, and the sweet security of streets. I would set up my tabernacle here. I am content to stand still at the age to which I am arrived; I, and my friends: to be no younger, no richer,

no handsomer. I do not want to be weaned by age; or drop, like mellow fruit, as they say, into the grave.—Any alteration, on this earth of mine, in diet or in lodging, puzzles and discomposes me. My household-gods plant a terrible fixed foot, and are not rooted up without blood. They do not willingly seek Lavinian shores. A new state of being staggers me."

The essence of Lamb himself is in that passage, and what a lovely passage of prose it is!

Lamb was a critic before he was an essayist. He did not find *himself* as a subject till he was forty-five. The *Essays of Elia* are largely autobiographical; and like so many of the finest products of the Romantic movement, they are in fact "Confessions," prompted by different themes. Much of their substance is fetched from Lamb's boyhood, having lain many years in his memory unused. Those essays "are" (I quote Professor Elton) "in essence *poems*: in so far, that is, as they are not the work of the 'understanding,' that mere arguing and expounding faculty against which Coleridge planned so many treatises, nor yet a mere Defoe-like reporting of the actual, hard and gritty in its vividness; but proceed from the brooding fancy, which softens the lines of the past, and purges its dross, mysteriously, without blurring or falsification of the truth."

Yes, passages in them are "poems in prose." Facts recalled in them, having lain many years beneath the level of deliberate recollection, have turned into visions; visions in which the essence of the past resides. True wisdom, if we are to believe Mr. Santayana, lies in the contemplation of Essences; certainly they are the stuff from which good literature is made. Hence, too, the charm of charity which pervades Lamb's work. When we see our lives and those of others mirrored as essences, impatience falls away. The charm of charity! How

different from the bogus charm of one who as he writes is "arranging himself in a mellow light, inviting us with gentle persistence to note how lovable he is." How different Lamb is from many of his school! I have not time to discuss him as a critic, but scattered through his letters, in his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, and in his essays, are some of the most imaginative and unerring perceptions to be found in the whole body of English criticism. Such essays as that on "Artificial Comedy" and on "Shakespeare's Tragedies," considered with reference to their fitness for stage representation, contain considerations which lead straight to the heart of æsthetic problems, though the method of the writer has only been to report what he has felt. This is the triumph of a critic who is also an artist in his work and not merely an analyst. Lamb had a superb gift for appreciation. That he was a poet himself is the secret of his greatness as a critic. Of course he had limitations. He was more sensitive to things old than new, to things old in literature, as he was to the by-gone characteristics of places, people, and customs. . . . I should like to end with Lamb's words on my lips. He is among the lesser luminaries of English literature, but—

"Hail, candle-light! without disparagement to sun or moon, the kindliest luminary of the three—if we may not rather style thee their radiant deputy, mild viceroy of the moon!—We love to read, talk, sit silent, eat, drink, sleep, by candle-light. They are everybody's sun and moon. This is our particular and household planet." And so is Lamb.

DESMOND MACCARTHY—from *The Listener*.

THE POET AND THE FILM

EVERY work of art is a product of the creative imagination, and to be worthy of the name of art, the film, too, must be a product of the creative imagination.

Before such a sentence can mean much, however, we must define that vague phrase, "the creative imagination." I do not particularly like to use the word "creative" in this connection. It imputes to the artist a god-like role and that is bad for his conceit. There is nothing new under the sun, and all the greatest artist can do is to discover new arrangements of existing elements. That is not really to be creative: it is re-creative, amusing, illuminative, instructive, affecting. But my excuse for using the word "creative" in conjunction with "imagination" is to imply something more than a merely mental activity. Not merely imagination, but imagination *embodied*. Imagination finding its objective equivalents in sight and sound and touch. Imagination translated into sensible shapes, tones and textures.

But imagination itself is a vague word. What do we mean by it? The meaning of imagination has been discussed for well over two thousand years. It is discussed very acutely by Aristotle, and from Aristotle the discussion passes to the great tradition of medieval scholasticism; and from that tradition it passed into the school of romantic criticism, notably, in this country, to Coleridge; and we are still discussing the meaning of imagination. Meanwhile, in the seventeenth century a school of philosophy arose, led by Descartes, which denied the existence of imagination, or regarded it as so

inferior to reason that it could and should be ignored. That school of philosophy held the field between the decline of scholasticism and the rise of romanticism, and the period of its predominance is sometimes called the Age of Reason or Enlightenment: it is an age of derivative styles in art. Imagination, we may conclude, is essential to art, though it may be opposed to reason. A rational work of art—that sounds like a contradiction in terms and I think *is* a contradiction in terms: it is a contradiction involved in the aims and methods of many modern film producers.

The centuries-long discussion of imagination to which I have referred succeeded in making a distinction between *ingenium* and *fantasia*: between fancy and imagination. This distinction was not always kept clear, because with that depressing desire to reduce all things to a unity which distinguishes philosophers, there has always been a tendency to reduce *ingenium* and *fantasia* to one faculty and call it the imagination. It has necessarily been a vain ambition, for actually two very distinct processes are involved.

Ingenium may be defined as the capacity to perceive or discover similitudes between otherwise disparate objects. We say that a person is as cool as a cucumber, by which we mean that we perceive this common element of coolness in two such disparate objects as such a person and a cucumber. Or describing the action of a man who is holding stocks in a rising market, we say that he is freezing on to a good thing, as water freezes to cold metal. These are elementary examples of simile and metaphor, but the whole art of poetry originates in such an activity. When the choice of terms in such comparisons is arbitrary (as it is in the case of the cucumber, because other things are cool besides the cucumber) then the activity might be called fancy or fantasy, and

it is what Coleridge called a mode of memory emancipated from the order of space and time; it is an activity of the will involving choice—a choice of objective and definite things which can be brought into some illuminating association.

But *ingenium*, fancy, wit or whatever we are to call it, does not exhaust the activities of the mind engaged in literary creation. There is another process which begins with a state of emotional tension and to this nucleus of feeling attracts the objects or events which objectify or express the feeling. Such objects or events are no longer arbitrary, but exact and necessary. Everything, as it were, must conform to the colour and force of the original emotion. The power of imagination, to quote Coleridge again, reveals itself in a balance and reconciliation of "a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession combined with enthusiasm and feeling profound and vehement."

The film produces its effect by projected images. These images, projected on the screen, are associated immediately with the images stored in the memory of the spectator, and from that association or collocation of images flow the emotions of surprise, delight, pleasure, pride or sorrow, which we experience in the picture house.

From this dependence on the visual image, there has arisen the notion that the films can only succeed as an art by avoiding all abstractions, by confining itself rigorously to the concrete image. Salvador Dali, who has written the scenario for an ultra-modern film called *Babaouo*, writes in the following strain:

> Contrary to the usual opinion, the cinema is infinitely poorer and more limited for the expression of real

processes of thought than is literature, painting, sculpture or architecture. About the only form below it is music, whose spiritual value, as everyone knows, is almost nil. The cinema is linked fundamentally, by its very nature, to the sensorial, vulgar and anecdotic surface of phenomena, to abstraction, to rhythmical impressions, in a word, to harmony. And harmony, the sublime product of abstraction, is by definition at the other extreme to the concrete, and consequently to poetry.

The rapid and continuous succession of images on the screen . . . hinders all attempts to achieve the concrete and annuls more often than not (thanks to the element memory) its intentional, affective, lyrical quality. The mechanism of memory, upon which these images act in a manner exceptionally direct, tends even in itself to the disorganization of the concrete, towards idealization.

In waking life, the latent purpose and the fury of the concrete nearly always become submerged in forgetfulness, but they rise to the surface again in dreams. The poetry of the film demands more than any other kind of poetry a complete dream metamorphosis in concrete irrationality before it can attain a real degree of lyricism.

And on the basis of that idea we have in France the surrealiste film—a film that is completely irrational in its content, a film that can only be compared with the dream, even with the nightmare, and which gains all its force and vividness by possessing the same characteristics as the dream. The foremost film of this kind is Jean Cocteau's *Le Sang d'un Poete*—A Poet's Blood—with music by Georges Auric. It is a vital experiment in film construction and it is the work of a poet—not of a

camera-man, a kinist, a filmist or whatever you want to call the creator of a film, but of a man who is first and foremost and all the time a poet.

This kind of film fits exactly, I think, our definition of fancy—a mode of memory emancipated from space and time. Its appeal depends on its concreteness, its irrationality, its strange dream-like fertility of images. Admittedly it is an extreme—just as lyric poetry is an extreme of expression. It rejects the logical: it seeks the lyrical appeal, the direct sensation of the concrete. The only commercial films which a superrealist like Dali can accept are apparently those of the Marx Brothers. But the elements which dominate a film like Cocteau's or *Animal Crackers* are elements present in most good films. The sudden projection of two images to suggest a similitude: in *Turksib* the swirl of water followed by the flickering revolutions of cotton bobbins—a swift concrete effort to convey complex ideas of underlying processes of dynamic cause and effect. The danger which threatens this kind of film is the *cliché*: the repetition of the same image in film after film—how often have we seen a close-up of corn waving against the sky, to suggest the peace of nature, of the wheels and piston of a locomotive to suggest travel, speed or power and so on. But that fault is due to a lack of the faculties which are so conspicuously absent from the film in general, the faculties which must come into the film to make it the great art which the potentialities of its technique suggest it may some day become—that is to say, the poetic faculty itself. To the absence of that faculty in the process of film production is due not only the poverty of film fantasy, but the almost total absence of the film of imagination.

The film of imagination—the film as a work of art ranking with great drama, great literature, and

great painting—will not come until the poet enters the studio.

I know what is immediately advanced against that idea—the necessity of working in the strict terms of a new medium, exploiting a new technique: the camera is the film artist's muse: down with the literary film and so on.

About such a point of view I have only two things to say: firstly, that in every art there is a good deal of cant spoken about technique. Most techniques can be learnt in a few days, at the most in a year or two. But no amount of technical efficiency will create a work of art in any medium if the creative or imaginative genius is lacking. Naturally the technique must appeal to the sensibility of the poet: he must love his medium and work in it with enthusiasm: but the vision necessary to create not merely the means, but the end—that is a gift of providence and we call that gift poetic genius.

Secondly, those people who deny that there can be any connection between the scenario and literature seem to me to have a wrong conception, not so much of the film as of literature. Literature they seem to regard as something polite and academic, in other words, as something godforsaken and superannuated, compounded of correct grammar and high-sounding ciceronian phrases. Such a conception reveals the feebleness of their sensibility. If I were asked to give the most distinctive quality of good writing, I should express it in this one word: VISUAL. Reduce the art of writing to its fundamentals and you come to this single aim: to convey images by means of words. But to *convey images*. To make the mind see. To project on to that inner screen of the brain a moving picture of objects and events, events and objects moving towards a balance and reconciliation of a more than

usual state of emotion with more than usual order. That is a definition of good literature—of the achievement of every good poet—from Homer and Shakespeare to James Joyce or Henry Miller. It is also a definition of the ideal film.

HERBERT READ—*A Coat of Many Colours.*

BANKING WITHOUT BLARNEY

I NEVER heard of anyone boasting that he was a bank clerk. There is nothing very dashing or swashbucklering about the life. The young banker wears no uniform, unless it be the office-coat by which he frugally lengthens the span of life of his out-door jacket. He bestrides nothing more fiery in the four-legged way than an office stool; and casts down—or casts up—whole columns with a pen instead of a machine-gun. He is a steady-going fellow who keeps good hours, a suburbanite, a season-ticket holder, an evening-worker in villa gardens with geometrical beds. He plays lawn-tennis, and sings in the choir, and paints in water-colours. He marries sedately, and after the first heat of youth; and in general chooses a more adventurous life for his son.

But he is a good fellow, and a pleasant chap to live with, and makes a happy woman of his wife. His business is a competitive one. Unlike the public servant, he cannot assert his dignity as an individual by a certain brusqueness of manner, a "take it or leave it" attitude. There is only one post-office in most small country towns; but there are generally two or three banks. Nor can he increase business by making a better article than the banker down the street, or by selling his goods cheaper. He can do no more for his customers than can his rivals. His terms are the same as theirs. To do more business than the banker down the street he must wear a more attractive expression, exhibit finer manners, bear more patiently with rudeness; use the soft answer that turneth not away business; listen to the hopes of the

young and the complaining of the old; exalt homely children into beauties; be well-stocked of news and yet avoid gossip; subtly convey that two per cent from him is better than precisely the same rate of interest from another bank; and convince a would-be borrower that he has been refused an overdraft for his own good.

A little sycophancy will be necessary. He will, for instance, find it advisable to juggle adroitly with the weather. If Mrs. Tomkins, a valuable depositor, says it is a fine morning, why then it is a fine morning, though the sullen thunderclouds are piling up material for a Niagara. Five minutes later—if Mrs. Tompkins has left the office—the prudent banker will agree with the Town Clerk's more correct estimate, that the weather is threatening. A banker's weather-glass should, on being tapped by a depositor, be prepared to whirl its pointer round like the ball of a roulette table. The truth about our climate should be reserved for borrowers who are not paying-off their overdrafts.

How agreeable a partner for life must the man be whose little asperities of character have been so rubbed into smoothness by the continual practice of self-suppression. If the wife of such a man asserts that the stringy mutton she has purveyed for his dinner is Spring Lamb, does he harshly contradict her? No; he imagines her a valuable customer of the bank (it will by no means diminish his happiness if he has so prudently governed his affections that she *is* a valuable customer of the bank) and then swallows the mis-statement—*and* the muscular mutton—with a smile. Later in the meal he tells her that the sodden suet-pudding is blowing about his plate like froth.

These statements of mine may savour of flippancy; but nothing is further from my mind. Continually to simulate good-nature is to become good-natured in the

end, or at least to master the difficult art of simulating good-nature. Determinedly asserting the good qualities in his customer's character, the banker comes at last to believe that the man really possesses some of them. When he has by turns become an Imperialist, a Liberal, and a broad-minded man—not *too* broad-minded—about Socialism, the banker perceives at last the glorious truth that all politics are vanity. When a customer speaks to him of religion, as in Northern Ireland a customer sometimes will, he hastens to answer a question that his cashier has not asked; and returns to his customer with a less dangerous topic. But if he be pressed into a corner about dogma he displays a toleration that in an earlier century would have caused him to be burned on both sides.

Following this middle way of life, the bank clerk ends by becoming the best citizen in the world. He does not break the law. He pays his rates, and his dog licence, and his motor licence. He even pays his income-tax, to the uttermost farthing; such is the salutary effect of watching his customers juggling with their consciences, and at the same time trying to keep himself from being involved. He is honest to a fault; fussily honest, his wife thinks. He is scrupulously truthful; at first from policy, then from habit. While as for secrecy! Compared with a bank manager the Sphinx is a chatter-box. You might safely confide murder to him. He would take steps to prevent loss to his bank in the event of your being hanged; but, with this exception, would divulge nothing that might contribute to your suspension.

The banker is a great controller of reputations. Credit is part of the capital of his customers; and no mean part of it. Let a banker stab a customer's reputation with his pen, and the wound is mortal. The banker is therefore chary of giving opinion about his fellows, and scrupulous

of forming it. Gossip is abhorrent to him. He becomes a trial to his wife in this one particular. He knows so much about his fellow-townsmen; and she knows he knows it. He knows whose vanity is making her husband spend more than he can afford. He knows what Mrs. X's fur coat cost—he must have seen the cheque. He knows, too, how much Mrs. Robinson inherited from her late husband, and whether it is merely a life-interest. He knows whether the Smythes who were once Smiths can really afford to keep a motor-car. Can a man truly love a woman, his wife asks herself, passionately, when he knows all these juicy secrets and won't tell them to her?

The standard of behaviour that rules the bank-clerk and the bank-manager must rule the Director and the General Manager. They expect complete integrity and high honour from their staff. They must themselves set the example. The bank official's conscience is not wryed with the casuistries of less noble businesses, the sophistries of salesmanship, the mirage-creations of advertisement, the tricks of the trade. Banking, at least in its lower walks, is the most honest occupation in the world. I have been in a bank for as many years as should have made a scoundrel of me if this were not so; and in all those years I was never asked to do anything in the course of my business that might not have been broadcast. It is no small thing to be able to say.

Why do the public look askance on the owners of these shining merits? That they do so is a saddening fact. I have heard banks blamed for harshness, for timidity, for lack of public spirit. It is the reckless blame of the uninformed. Your amateur economist—and all economists are amateurs—asks with a wiseacre air why banks don't promote industry, don't go out with full hands to subsidize railways, factories, multiple shops, agriculture, and

what not. The answer is; because their hands are full of other people's money. Their job is to take care of that money for the folk who asked them to take care of it. They have no other. The chief way of doing this job is to help a successful business man to be more successful. A banker is not a business man but a judge and assessor of business men's abilities.

Then there is the matter of security, a ticklish consideration that thins the banker's hair, especially when he comes to call in the loan. Take, for example, the security of a house. A banker very soon learns that the value of a house may bear little relation to what it cost to build. For the house that a man builds for himself is the concrete expression of his dream, and of his wife's; especially of his wife's. The more completely the dream is realized, the less is likely to be obtained for the actuality.

Another disillusioning fact that is ultimately burned into the young and generous-minded manager is the three values of house-property. The first, and highest, value is when the house is unpledged, and the owner can sell it or not, as he likes. The second value, much lower, is when the house is pledged to a bank, and the bank is pressing the owner to sell. The owner does not disclose this fact; his wife doesn't; the bank manager certainly doesn't—for to do so would depreciate his security; the house-cat is silent. But, in a small town at any rate, *the news leaks out*. And (human nature being, not what it ought to be, but what bank managers know it is) no one, since the owner is in a difficulty, will make a fair offer for the house. It sells for price Number Two; and the bank narrowly escapes loss.

Last price of all; the lowest. The customer has come to utter financial grief; and the bank is obliged to take over the house and sell it by auction. The public knows

that the bank has no use for a house; and they will let it fall to ruin sooner than not get a thief's penny of it. The bank makes a smart loss on a loan seemingly well covered.

Sometimes security takes strange forms in Ireland. I knew a manager advance money on the fact that a farmer had a hard-working wife and twelve young children! Not very tempting security, on the surface, you will say. But in Ireland land-hunger is a gnawing ache. Sooner than let the land pass out of the family those twelve children stood together and worked like ants. The debt was paid off. Yet the banker took heavy risk. A widow with a young family is all motherly love and little sense of obligation to pay her husband's debts.

In Ireland, too, the matter-of-factness, at least of country banking, is continually seasoned with humour. We are better mixers than in other parts of the world. A humorist with a ten-pound deposit and a humorist with twenty thousand pounds are closer to each other than two dull-witted millionaires. And we are endowed with a gift of racy and unexpected speech.

Some years ago, a small farmer's wife requested my cashier to give her cash for a cheque payable to her husband and not endorsed by him. On being told that her husband's endorsement must be obtained she was very indignant.

"*Him* put his name to it," she said. "Isn't it myself does all the work, an' he smoking his pipe on the ditch. Sure that fellow's nothing but an ould *faux pas*."

The country bank manager writing to what he esteems the uneducated will do well to pay particular attention to his own grammar. I once sent a document to a small farmer by post, asking him to "sign opposite the cross in red ink." The document came back unsigned. On it was the laconic note, in pencil: "No red ink."

The monotony of his work makes the banker, the young banker, prone to attempt and to enjoy small jokes. Some of them are made possible by that very monotony. The bank manager becomes fussy as he grows older, especially at nights. He peers around, careworn, locks cupboards, picks bits of paper off the floor and scrutinizes them closely, lest bank secrets be written thereon. He bars doors and examines windows, sometimes sinning his soul woefully over spring-blinds; and then goes back and does it all over again, ignoring the reminders of his patient wife that he has done it all before. "You old idiot," she sometimes adds; and who, except her husband, would blame her? I know a bank manager who used to go out to the yard every night, lock up the meat-safe, and bring back the key to put under his pillow. He has given up the practice since the night when, locking up Sunday's chicken, he locked up the cat as well. But in particular the manager is worried about the locking of the bank safe. In time it becomes a mechanical act. He cannot be certain whether he has done it or not. A waggish cashier of my acquaintance used to cut short his nervous manager's evening game of golf by enquiring innocently whether the old man had locked the safe that day. Sometimes he played the jest with variations. His manager was an inveterate smoker, never very sure when he had a cigarette in his mouth. If the customary trick failed, the cashier would still remain pensive.

"I wonder were you smoking when you locked the cash box, sir," he would say, as they walked between strokes.

"Dear me," the old man would answer, halting. "Was I?—Do you think I was?"

"It would be very awkward if you had dropped a spark among the large notes, sir," the jester would add. Next moment the old man would be in retreat to his

office, looking anxiously above the roofs of the town for the smoke of its burning.

Do I seem to laugh at my former colleagues in the ancient, and honourable profession of banking? No; I laugh with them, sometimes at myself. I am retired from the bank; but, in the nightmare that still visits me now and then, I see the gaping entrance of a bank safe empty of cash, and know with sweating terror that I have at last forgotten to turn my key.

LYNN DOYLE—*Not Too Serious.*

THE BEETLE THAT WENT ON HIS TRAVELS

Delendus est the Colorado beetle. There can be no question about that. He is a dangerous fellow and must be given no asylum. And yet it is impossible for the soft-hearted not to sympathize with him. Though he does much harm, he may mean none. There are for instance the two beetles lately landed from France; one found after a snug voyage in a French ship at Grimsby docks and the other who was crossing from Boulogne on the main deck of the SS. *Whitstable* and presumably enjoying the fresh sea air. It may be that both of them, with a prescience denied to many British tourists, were merely anxious to get out of France before they were stranded by the railway strike. The *Whitstable* beetle must have thought himself a very important person when his arrival was announced by the wireless and he was met with due ceremony by an official of the Ministry of Agriculture. He little knew what was coming to him. His fate recalls that of another traveller, the late Dr. Crippen. His coming had also been announced on the wireless by the shrewd captain of the SS. *Montrose*, so that he was met off Quebec by Inspector Dew, disguised as a pilot, doubtless with a polite "Dr. Crippen, I presume." But, unlike the doctor, the poor beetle had, as far as we know, nothing on his conscience.

He was not nearly so fortunate as a famous member of his race, Andersen's beetle that went on his travels. That beetle too had a nautical adventure, for he was tied to a stick serving as a mast in an old wooden shoe, and sailed away helpless into the open sea. He was rescued

and liberated by a girl in a boat and flew straight back into the warm and comforting atmosphere of his home in the Emperor's stable. And yet he was a vainglorious beetle, for he had originally flown away because he was not given golden shoes. He was a downright wicked one, because in the course of his travels he had married a charming young lady beetle and then heartlessly deserted her and a possible family. It seems clear that among beetles as among men the undeserving too often prosper while the virtuous are cast out. As likely as not our poor beetle, having little knowledge of geography, thought that the *Whitstable* would take him straight to his home state. It's a long, long way to Colorado, but his innocent heart was right there.

The Times, June 19, 1947.

"RECESSIONAL" IN RETROSPECT

It is fifty years to-day since Kipling's famous poem "Recessional" appeared on this page, as "the captains and the kings" were departing from the scene of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. To-day it has been informally adopted into the liturgy of patriotic dedication; what is more remarkable in retrospect is the instantaneous acclamation with which the nation received it on its first appearance. It has become the fashion to look back upon the Diamond Jubilee as a supreme manifestation of jingoism, of vainglory, of the crude and vulgar rejoicing by a materialist generation in mere wealth and mere physical power over less fortunate races. To all such sentiments the austere and devout lines of "Recessional" are a rebuke. That the sentiments had been expressed at the Jubilee is undeniable, or it would not have been necessary to rebuke them, but the immediate recognition of the truth and greatness of the poem is equally good evidence that it corresponded to a feeling in the heart of the people that was no less characteristic of their mood, though less loudly expressed, than the exaltation they had been proclaiming.

The response suggests that "Recessional" made articulate the impression remaining in the minds of the public as they looked back upon the Jubilee itself. They had been engaged in giving thanks for the unexampled power and prosperity that sixty years of the Queen's reign had brought to their country, and naturally they gave thanks with joy. But as the immediate excitement faded they were left to think over the lesson they had

been taught, and substantially they agreed with Kipling that to render thanks for power in the sight of God is above all to acknowledge that power means responsibility, and its exercise is a divine vocation. That is the doctrine that "Recessional" crystallized. *The Times* on the same day attempted to express it in prose:

> To be humble in our strength, to avoid the excesses of an over-confident vanity, to be as regardful of the rights of others as if we were neither powerful nor wealthy, to shun "Such boasting as the Gentiles use, Or lesser breeds without the Law"—these are the conditions upon which our dominion by sea and land is based even more than on fleets and armies.

If the men of 1897 were asked to give a name to this reverent attitude to the responsibilities of power, they could have proffered no other than "imperialism." The great conception of Empire has been ignorantly traduced as if the word were synonymous with alien domination imposed by force, and it is well to be reminded of what it meant to the men who first proclaimed it with the fervour of a gospel. In the earlier part of Queen Victoria's reign it had been fashionable to regard the colonies as encumbrances, destined in the very near future to drop away naturally, to the economic advantage of the Mother Country. It was against this pusillanimity, as they thought it, not against the sort of megalomania that may or may not have seized the nation at the time of the Diamond Jubilee, that the great teachers of imperialism—men like Seeley, Chamberlain, Dilke, Milner—reacted. They told their countrymen that dominion over palm and pine was a trust not to be laid down until its service was accomplished. England must indeed liberate her colonies. Liberation, however,

did not mean turning them adrift in a hostile world, but guiding them over a long period in the practice of the arts of freedom that her own people had worked out through centuries. There was no contradiction between Empire and liberty; Empire was the medium through which the idea of liberty was to be diffused, and the means of protection while its practice was learnt. So the great acts of emancipation which followed so quickly upon the Diamond Jubilee, the federation of Australia in the last year of the century, the union of South Africa within a few years of the military defeat of the Boer republics, were not repudiations of imperialist thought, but its fulfilment. And so too the still greater act which is to take place next month, when two Indian dominions take upon themselves the responsibility for which two centuries of the British Raj have been the preparation, does not mean that a repentant Britain has forsworn some imagined ambition of despotism that she set before herself in the Victorian era. This long-prepared release is British imperialism, continuous and consistent with itself, and proceeding now to a consummation which Macaulay, more than a century ago, explicitly foresaw as the proudest moment in the history of the Empire.

The Times, July 17, 1947.

NOTES

FALSE FRIENDS AND TRUE

THIS passage from Ecclesiasticus (about 200 B.C.) illustrates the earliest form of "dispersed meditations" and was chosen for comparison with Bacon's essay on Friendship which follows. It has many of the qualities of the essay, its observation of life, its brevity of expression, its detachment from emotion while, at the same time, displaying some of the inspiration of the lyric, and its reflection of the writer's personality. We know little of Jesus, son of Sirach (or, as he is sometimes called, Jeshua Ben-Sira), but the book of his wisdom gives us enough indication of his outlook and character. The text quoted is that employed by A. D. Power in a version published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1939, which he describes as a conflation of various ancient versions and emendations of modern scholars. The only difference is the omission of the verse-divisions.

OF FRIENDSHIP

FRANCIS BACON (1561-1626) was a lawyer who attained prominence in his profession and in 1618 became Lord High Chancellor with the dignity of Baron Verulam and, later, of Viscount St. Albans. He is generally known as Lord Bacon. He was ultimately convicted of receiving bribes and dismissed from his office. His merits as a philosopher were considerable, and in the *Novum Organum* he laid the foundations of scientific investigation. Other works which attracted attention were *The Advancement of Learning* and *The History of the Reign of Henry VII.*

Epimenides: a legendary Cretan soothsayer who is said to have fallen asleep for fifty-seven years as a boy.

Numa: the legendary second king of Rome.

Empedocles: a Sicilian philosopher whose desire to investigate the crater of Mount Etna proved fatal to him. Lamb, Milton, Meredith and Matthew Arnold all refer to the story.

Apollonius of Tyana: a magician and philosopher of the first century A.D.

castoreum, sarza: castoreum was a drug as old as Aristotle's time, said to have been extracted from the beaver; sarza is sarsaparilla, which is got from the root of the climbing plant Smilax.

participes curarum: in English, sharers of one's anxieties.

L. Sylla, Pompey: famous generals of the Roman Republic. Sylla (often spelt Sulla) made himself master of the Republic. Pompey, a younger man, was first the friend and then the opponent of Cæsar, who defeated him at Pharsalia.

Decimus Brutus, Antonius: the one the treacherous friend of Cæsar who joined the murderers, the other the loyal follower. See Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar.*

Cicero: the greatest of Roman orators. The Philippics were attacks on Antony, so called after Demosthenes' attacks on Philip of Macedon.

Mæcenas: friend of Augustus, the first Roman Emperor and patron of the poets Virgil and Horace.

Sejanus: the fall of this friend of Tiberius, the successor of Augustus, is commemorated in Ben Jonson's tragedy *Sejanus.*

Plautianus: Pretorian Prefect, that is, chief minister of Septimius Severus, Emperor A.D. 193-211.

Trajan, Marcus Aurelius: two of the greatest Emperors, the latter famous for his philosophic Meditations.

Commineus: Philippe de Commines (1445-1511) wrote chronicles of the reigns of the French Kings, Louis XI and Charles VIII. Charles the Hardy—better known as Charles the Bold—was Duke of Burgundy and eventually fell in battle at Nancy against the Swiss. See Scott's *Quentin Durward.*

Pythagoras: a Greek philosopher of Samos (*c.* 510-450 B.C.). For his theory of the transmigration of souls see *Twelfth Night.*

Themistocles: a Greek statesman (*c.* 510-450 B.C.). He made Athens a great naval power and was responsible for the famous victory over Xerxes at Salamis. The reference to cloth of Arras is a very free summary of Themistocles' remark. He was ultimately exiled.

Heraclitus: of Ephesus (*c.* 500 B.C.). A philosopher whose melancholy outlook on life has led to his being known as "the weeping philosopher."

OF YOUTH AND AGE

Juventutem, etc.: he spent a youth that was crowded with mistakes, indeed, with mad violences.

Cosmus, Duke of Florence: Cosmo dei Medici (1389-1464) who for thirty years was master of the Florentine Republic: the title Duke was adopted by his descendants but not by him.

Gaston de Foix: (1331-91) represented by Froissart as the beau ideal of knighthood.

Hermogenes: a rhetorician of Tarsus in the days of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. When he was fifteen, he became Professor of Greek eloquence at Rome and wrote a book on Oratory. It is said that he lost his memory and then his mind at the age of twenty-five.

Hortensius: a Roman orator, friend and rival of Cicero (i.e. Tully), whom Bacon quotes as saying of him, "He did not change though his teaching did."

Scipio Africanus: the Roman general who conquered Carthage. Livy's remark means that he was more honourable in youth than towards the end of his life.

OF SOLITUDE

ABRAHAM COWLEY was born in 1618 and died in 1667, and was a youthful prodigy whose first volume of poems was published when he was fifteen. His essays, which are of the didactic type, are much superior to his verse, which is often strained and affected. The essays are invariably a peg on which he hung his verses, as in this essay.

Nunquam minus, etc.: never less alone than when alone.

Seneca: died A.D. 65. A philosopher who was tutor to Nero in his youth.

Hannibal: one of the great generals of the world who fought for Carthage against Rome in the second Punic War.

Tecum vivere amem, etc.: from a famous ode of the Latin poet Horace, Book 3, Ode 9. Horace and Lydia quarrel about their rival lovers, but finally agree to make it up. Gladstone's translation of the final verse, from which this line comes and which expresses Lydia's resolve, runs:

> Though fairer than the stars is he,
> Thou rougher than the Adrian sea
> And fickle as light cork, *yet I*
> *With thee would live, with thee would die.*

Sic ego secretis possum: from Tibullus (55-19 B.C.).

Odi et amo, etc.: Catullus was a great Roman Lyric poet (84-54 B.C.).

O vita, etc.: misquoted from Publilius Syrus, a first-century writer.
O quis me gelidis, etc.: a passage from Virgil's second Georgic The currently accepted text differs slightly from Cowley's. The meaning is, "O who will set me beneath Haemus' frozen mountains, and protect me with the mighty shadow of its branches."

A FAIR AND HAPPY MILKMAID

Sir Thomas Overbury (1581-1613) is perhaps more famous for his unhappy murder in the Tower of London by James I's favourite, Carr, than for his writings, of which the *Characters* are the most notable. These *Characters* are an imitation of similar descriptions written by the Greek philosopher Theophrastus, a younger contemporary of Aristotle. Overbury also wrote poems, and the poetic touch in the *Fair and Happy Milkmaid* is unmistakable.

almond-glove: a form of kid glove.
chirurgery: surgery.

A PLAIN COUNTRY FELLOW

John Earle (1601?-65) became successively Bishop of Worcester and Bishop of Salisbury in the reign of Charles II, whose exile he had shared during the Commonwealth. The sketches of character and manners in his *Microcosmography* were plainly inspired by Overbury's work, but surpass it by their shrewdness and humour. He had a gift of terse and epigrammatic phrasing, as, for example, "His hand guides the plough and the plough his thoughts." If this description of a plain country fellow is compared with Addison's description of Will Wimble, the part that the *Microcosmography* played in preparing the way for the "little novels" of the *Spectator* and other eighteenth-century periodicals is self-evident.

sallets: i.e. salads.

THE TRUMPET CLUB

Sir Richard Steele was born in Dublin in 1672 New Style and died in 1729. His partnership with Addison, at first in the *Tatler*, which he started in 1709, and then in the *Spectator* a few months afterwards,

constitutes a landmark in English prose literature. His easy, familiar style, his humour and gentle irony, and his undoubted scholarship made him just the man to adapt the essay and the "characters" of Earle to the needs of an age that was marked by levity of conduct and thought, but at the same time eminently reasonable. Steele's finest achievement was possibly the essay on the *Spectator Club*; the *Trumpet Club*, which appeared in the *Tatler*, is its forerunner and in some respects may be regarded as the ancestor of the novel. It has its links with the past; Latin tags, which polite conversation was beginning to regard as pedantic, still appear; there is a didactic note about the opening paragraph: but it is intended to amuse readers of a periodical and reflects, as all periodical literature does, the mood and outlook of its age.

Habeo senectuti, etc.: the translation of this passage of Cicero is: "I owe much thanks to old age, which has increased my love of conversation while not diminishing that of food and drink."

Jack Ogle: (?1647-?85) was notorious for his profligacy. Through his sister's influence he obtained a commission in the Horse Guards, but had not the means to provide his equipment: hence the reference to the petticoat and cloak, since he was rumoured to employ all sort of shifts to afford a uniform.

Hudibras: Butler's satirical poem, published at various dates between 1663 and 1678.

Naseby: like Marston Moor, one of the decisive battles of the Civil War, in which Parliament defeated Charles I.

a long Canterbury tale: a reference to Chaucer's famous poem.

Nestor: distinguished among the Grecian chiefs at Troy by his wisdom and eloquence. He was King of Pylos in the Peloponnese.

His tongue dropped manna: said of Belial in Book II of Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

THE SPECTATOR CLUB

Ast alii sex, etc.: i.e. six others and more shout together with one voice. Juvenal was a Latin satirist who wrote between 100 and 130 A.D. Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* is an imitation of his tenth satire.

My Lord Rochester and Sir George Etherege: both well-known gallants of the reign of Charles II, the former a poet of some skill, the latter a writer of comedies.

Bully Dawson: a notorious character to whom Lamb also refers in the essay *Popular Fallacies*, "Bully Dawson kicked by half the town, and half the town kicked by Bully Dawson."

Aristotle: the famous Greek philosopher. The reference here is to his study of the laws of the drama in the Poetics.

Longinus: another classic writer: author of a study of the Sublime in literature. He died A.D. 273.

Littleton or Coke: Sir Thomas was a judge (1422-81) who wrote in legal French a treatise on the law of property. Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634) published a commentary on Littleton under the title of *Institutes*.

Will's: a coffee-house at No. 1 Bow Street, at the corner of Russell Street. It was a popular resort of the writers of Steele's time.

Duke of Monmouth: an illegitimate son of Charles II whom the "exclusionists" set up as a rival to the future James II. His attempt to secure the throne ended in disaster at the Battle of Sedgemoor.

SIR ROGER AND WILL WIMBLE

JOSEPH ADDISON was educated at Charterhouse School, where Steele was one of his schoolfellows. He became a distinguished classical scholar at Oxford and entered the public service, becoming chief Secretary for Ireland and, later, a Lord Commissioner of Trade. Born in 1672, he died in 1719. In one of the *Spectator* papers he admitted to the desire to bring "philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffee-houses." With him the essay first appeals to a wider public and eschews the massive wisdom of Bacon and the wide learning of Cowley; his prose is simpler and more like our own. Our notes illustrate this, or, rather, the lack of them. The didactic element is very slight, the personal gossip is marked.

Gratis anhelans, etc.: Phaedrus was a writer of fables in verse of Augustus' time. The line means: freely yawning, doing nothing when doing much.

jack: a pike.

MEDITATIONS IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Pallida mors, etc: despite the growing dislike of pedantry, these essays still, we note, carry their latin motto. This well-known verse of Horace means: "Pale death beats with impartial foot at

the hovels of the poor and the castles of kings. O happy Sestius, the brief span of life forbids us to entertain a long hope. Even now, night, and storied ghosts and the cheerless house of Pluto will press upon thee."

Sir Cloudesley Shovel: (1650-1707) an admiral of the time of Queen Anne. As a young man he is said to have swum under the enemy's fire with despatches in his mouth. He perished in a shipwreck.

ON STYLE

The famous Dean of St. Patrick's and author of *Gulliver's Travels* was, according to Johnson, contented to be called an Irishman by the Irish, but would occasionally call himself an Englishman. Born in 1667, he died in 1745 New Style. He must be regarded as one of the greatest of English prose writers.

phizz, hipps, mob, pozz, rep: physiognomy (i.e. face), depression (short for hypochondria), riotous crowd (short for mobile), positive, and reputation. Banter was then considered slang.

Hooker: (?1554-1600) a theologian who became Master of the Temple and in defence of the Church of England against the Puritans wrote a book that has become a classic, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity.*

Parsons: a Roman Catholic missionary priest of Elizabeth's reign. He escaped abroad to work for a Spanish invasion of England in 1581 when his colleague Campion, a more patriotic man, was caught and hanged.

Wotton: a courtly poet (1568-1639) who wrote a prose work on architecture.

Sir Robert Naunton: a politician who left behind him an account of the principal courtiers of Queen Elizabeth (1563-1635).

Osborn: presumably Elias Osborn (1643-1720) a Puritan who wrote an account of his sufferings in the cause of his faith.

Daniel: (1562-1619) the poet who wrote a verse history of the Wars of the Roses.

BEAU TIBBS AT HOME

Goldsmith, who lived from 1730-74, was the son of an Irish clergyman, and, though he was a man of such varied talents that his novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, his comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and his poems *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village* have all taken their place among the classics of English Literature, he spent his life in a continual struggle with poverty. His essays were pot-boilers, the

result of this struggle: *Beau Tibbs*, for example, was one of a series which he wrote for a daily newspaper, *The Public Ledger*, in return for a guinea an essay. These essays, which embodied the comments on English society and habits of a Chinaman who was supposed to be visiting England, were published two years afterwards as *Letters from a Citizen of the World*. Herbert Read has in his work on *English Prose Style* analysed the structure of the eighteenth-century essay and his analysis is applicable to many of Goldsmith's essays, since his need for the guineas made the writing of them more or less a matter of routine. They begin with a familiar note, followed by a statement of the subject. The writer then appeals to common experience, and then reinforces his argument with an anecdote from which he finally draws a moral. *Beau Tibbs*, however, is a character sketch of the type of the Coverley papers which Addison wrote for the *Spectator* rather than an essay conforming to the normal type.

querist: questioner.
japanned: covered with a hard varnish.
mandarin: Chinese official.
Grisoni: (1692-1769) an Italian painter who spent some years in England, and whose portraits were much admired.
Gardens . . . horns: Spring Gardens, first laid out in 1660 and closed in 1859. The better known name, Vauxhall Gardens dates from about 1785. Boswell describes the entertainment as a "curious show, gay exhibition, music vocal and instrumental" coupled with "good eating." The horn, as a musical instrument in an orchestra, had the charm of comparative novelty, having been introduced by Handel in the reign of George I.
ortolan: the bunting, regarded as a table delicacy.

ON THE INSTABILITY OF WORLD GRANDEUR

Goldsmith wrote this essay in *The Bee*, a periodical which he himself founded and which did not survive its eighth number. The periodical was issued every Saturday, and this particular essay, together with one on *Education*, appeared on Saturday, November 10, 1759. The essay on *Education* has some extremely interesting as well as quite modern ideas; the one, however, on the *Instability of World Grandeur* so easily lends itself to Herbert Read's analysis that it has been preferred here.

Alexander VI: Rodrigo Borgia (1431-1503) became Pope Alexander VI in 1492. His son was Cæsar Borgia, the hero of Machiavelli's

famous book *The Prince*. There is no historical proof that either was quite as black as tradition has painted them.

Confucius: the famous Chinese teacher and moralist (about 550-478 B.C.).

Grub Street: near Moorfields, later called Milton Street. In the eighteenth century it was much inhabited by minor writers, and hence was used as a term of reproach for some poor and indifferent work of literature.

THE INDIAN JUGGLERS

WILLIAM HAZLITT (1778-1830) is remembered chiefly by his essays published in *Table Talk* in the early twenties of the nineteenth century: his ability as a critic is shown also in his *Lectures on the English Poets* and his *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* (1819). His defects were many—prejudices, over-indulgence in quotation, at times long-windedness—but he sweeps the reader along by the force of his utterance. Augustine Birrell in his essay on Hazlitt applies to him the words that he himself used in his description of Cavanagh, "His service was tremendous," and it is this zest for movement and action that makes such essays as *The Indian Jugglers* and *The Fight* most characteristic of the man. He had, too, a gift of sparkling and memorable phrase, often rhythmical—" a Rochester without the vice, a modern Surrey "—and he talked of many things, because he was interested in many things. Analyse this essay: from juggling he passes to intellectual inadequacy, and thence to the anatomy of habit; a tribute to Sir Joshua Reynolds as an artist leads on to a consideration of what constitutes the finest art, the differences between cleverness, talent, and genius, and of what greatness consists. His mind then leaps back to his original subject of manual dexterity and he ends the essay with a glowing account of a fives-player. As it were, he splashes his thoughts on a broad canvas, yet, withal, is always interesting, because—to quote a saying of Wordsworth's—his language is not the " dress of his thoughts but the incarnation of them."

Goldsmith's pedagogue: the village schoolmaster in *The Deserted Village*. The lines in the poem run:

> " In arguing too the parson owned his skill
> For e'en though vanquished he could argue still."

the Juggernaut: in Hindu mythology one of the incarnations of the God Vishnu. At the festival of Juggernaut, at Puri in Orissa, the

pilgrims used to throw themselves in front of the massive car carrying the image of Juggernaut in the faith that, having been crushed by it, they would go straight to heaven.

Ivanhoe: Sir Walter Scott's novel.

"in tones and gestures hit": from Milton's *Paradise Regained,* where the line is: "in tones and numbers hit," since the reference is to music.

commercing with the skies: quoted from Milton's *Il Penseroso.*

and visions, etc: lines from the poet Gray.

thrills in each nerve, etc: a line from Pope's *Essay on Man.*

Dutch painters: for example, Ruysdael, Franz Hals, Vermeer, Rembrandt.

regions we must pass like Satan: the realm of Chaos described in Book II of Milton's *Paradise Lost* when Satan flies "O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough dense or rare."

Rochester: see note to *Spectator Club.*

Surrey: a poet of the time of Henry VIII.

Themistocles: see note to Bacon's *Essay of Friendship.*

Jedediah Buxton: an extraordinary person of the later eighteenth century. Though quite illiterate, he had unusual facility in calculation. It is said that, when he went to see Garrick in *Richard III,* he was able at the end of the performance to tell the number of words each actor had used, and the number of steps in a dance. The point here is the contrast between mechanical skill in mental arithmetic and the mathematical genius of

John Napier: (1550-1617) the inventor of Logarithms.

Napier's bones: a subtle jest, since Napier's bones is a name given to a contrivance he invented to facilitate multiplication and division. Davie Ramsay, in Scott's *The Fortunes of Nigel,* is made to swear by them, "by the bones of the immortal Napier."

Newton: Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) the discoverer of gravitation and the first to propound the wave theory of light.

Molière: Jean Baptiste Poquelin (1622-73) the greatest of French comic dramatists.

the author of Don Quixote: Cervantes, who died on the same day as Shakespeare.

"dies and leaves the world no copy": quoted from Viola's remark to Olivia in *Twelfth Night.*

Mrs. Siddons: Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) the most celebrated actress of Hazlitt's time. Her most famous part was Lady Macbeth.

John Hunter: (1728-93) one of the greatest of English surgeons and a lecturer on Anatomy.

Michael Angelo: (1475-1564) Italian sculptor, painter, architect, and

poet. He painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, designed St. Peter's and left some of the world's greatest sculpture, for instance, the statue of Moses.

Sir Humphry Davy: the chemist (1778-1829) who invented the miners' safety lamp, for which the mining industry owed him a debt, which Hazlitt fails to recognize.

the Roman poet: Horace, *Odes* (book III, Ode 1), where the literal translation runs "Black Care sits behind the rider."

Brougham: an eloquent lawyer (1778-1868) who became Lord Chancellor.

Canning: (1770-1827) like Brougham a good speaker and utimately, in 1827, Prime Minister. With some friends he founded a witty paper known as the *Anti-Jacobin* in 1797.

Cobbett: (1762-1835) a champion of democracy and of the rural labourers in the pages of the *Weekly Register*, which he issued for thirty-three years.

Junius: the anonymous author of *The Letters of Junius*, which appeared in the *Public Advertiser* between 1768 and 1771, attacking two successive Prime Ministers, the Duke of Grafton and Lord North, and even the King himself. There is a belief that the author was Sir Philip Francis, but nothing is known for certain.

Castlereagh: Viscount Castlereagh, second Marquess of Londonderry, was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and committed suicide, probably as the result of over-strain, in 1822. Shelley alludes, like Hazlitt, to the mask-like expression of his face.

Croker: John Wilson Croker was Secretary to the Admiralty from 1809 to 1830. He was born in Cork and educated at Trinity College, Dublin.

Peel: a statesman famous for his inauguration of the Police Force, and for his abolition of the Corn Laws when he was Prime Minister from 1841 to 1846.

Manners Sutton: (1780-1845) son of the Archbishop of Canterbury and Speaker of the House of Commons at the time Canning became Prime Minister. He afterwards became the first Viscount Canterbury.

Let no rude hand, etc.: the closing lines of Wordsworth's *Ellen Irwin*, published in 1800 among *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland*.

ELIA AND GEOFFREY CRAYON

OUR second example of Hazlitt's work is drawn from *The Spirit of the Age*, in which he embodied his impressions and critical judg-

ment of his contemporaries: for Hazlitt is even greater as a critic than as a writer of miscellaneous essays, and has been, in fact, acclaimed by some as the greatest of all English critics. Since Hazlitt's time, literary criticism has found in the essay the best medium for its expression, and the reader will be able to compare this essay with its modern counterpart by a great literary critic of our own day when he comes to the essay on *Elia After a Hundred Years* by Desmond MacCarthy. Hazlitt had this advantage that he knew Lamb personally, and not the least interesting portion of the essay is the portrait of the Lamb his friends knew.

lucubrations: strictly speaking, a lucubration is the product of nocturnal study and hence is applied to any work carefully constructed or even over-elaborate.

like the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow: from *Romeo and Juliet,* Act III, scene 5. Cynthia is the moon.

specimens of curious relics: Lamb's *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets.*

shuffle off this mortal coil: Hamlet, Act III, scene 1.

sophist: an affected philosopher.

the self-applauding bird: from Cowper's *Truth.*

new-born gauds, etc.: this and the following quotation "give to dust, etc." are from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida,* Act III, scene 3.

do not in broad rumour lie: from Milton's *Lycidas,* as are also "set off in the glistering foil of fashion" and "live and breathe aloft"—with variations.

chiaro-scuro: light and shade in painting.

vital signs that it will live: Milton remarked of his own early compositions that "the style, by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live."

Mrs. Battle: one of Lamb's best-loved essays.

the chimes of midnight: 2 Henry IV, Act III, scene 2.

Justice Shallow and Master Silence: two country justices who appear in the scene just mentioned. Shallow also appears in *The Merry Wives of Windsor.*

cheese and pippins: Merry Wives, Act I, scene 2.

a certain writer: Hazlitt himself who wrote on Guy Fawkes for the *Examiner* in 1821. Lamb wrote on the same subject for the *London* in 1823.

Titian head: from the painter Titian (1477-1576) who was one of the great Venetian colourists. It implies red hair.

to have coined his heart for jests: see *Julius Cæsar,* Act IV, scene 3.

As usual, Hazlitt adapts his quotations, for Brutus said nothing about jests.

Mr. Waithman: Lord Mayor 1823, the year of Lamb's dinner at the Mansion House.

Mr. Godwin: (1756-1836) the author of *Political Justice* and father in-law of Shelley.

Tom Brown: (1778-1820) a philosopher who also wrote poetry.

Sterne: the author of *Tristram Shandy.*

Henry Mackenzie: (1745-1831) wrote novels, essays, and plays, now forgotten.

anachronism: a reference in literature to something out of harmony with the age.

Washington Irving: (1783-1859) a famous American author, who published the burlesque *History of New York*, by "Diedrich Knickerbocker" in 1809 and came to Europe in 1815, staying till 1832. He published the *Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* in 1819-20 and *Bracebridge Hall* in 1822.

THE PRAISE OF CHIMNEY-SWEEPERS

As fathers of the modern essay, Lamb and Hazlitt are linked together: yet there is a vast difference between the sledge-hammer style of Hazlitt and the dreamy quietness of Lamb. But Lamb has always, except to a few, been the more popular. Charles Lamb was born in 1775 and died in 1834. After his schooling at Christ's Hospital, where Coleridge was his schoolfellow, he entered the East India Company's service as a clerk, retiring in 1825. A tragedy in his youth, when his sister Mary was seized with homicidal mania, led him to devote his life to the care of her and made him the kindly, unselfish individual he reveals himself to be. With him, therefore, his literary work is a leisure-time amusement; he is not, like Hazlitt, animated by a desire to get his ideas over to the public; he plays with them merely to amuse. This is why his essays are purely personal, humorous and light-hearted, but imbued with the tenderness and sympathy with the afflicted that marked his character. His humanity is the basis of his popularity, for his style is artificial, and his humour is but a matter of what he himself in his essay on *Distant Correspondents* called "agreeable levities." In the preface to *Last Essays of Elia* he writes of himself that his essays are "a sort of unlicked, incondite things—villainously pranked in an affected array of antique modes and phrases." The whole preface is a self-portrait with some element of truth amidst a matrix of self-depreciatory exaggeration.

The Praise of Chimney-sweepers well illustrates these features of his work. He was always interested in children—did he not write an essay on *Dream-children*?—and most so in children whose lot is unhappy. There is tender humour in the story of the chimney-sweep who could not resist the white sheets of Arundel Castle. Of this essay Augustine Birrell writes (*Self-selected Essays*) "To read aloud the Praise of Chimney-sweepers without stumbling or halting, not to say mispronouncing, and to set in motion every one of its carefully-swung sentences is a very pretty feat in elocution, for there is not what can be called a natural sentence in it from beginning to end." All of which is why it appears here.

nigritude: blackness.
fauces Averni: the jaws of hell.
kibed: chapped; a reminiscence of *Hamlet*, Act V, scene 1.
tester: sixpence.
'yclept: an archaic word for "called."
saloop: the name under which sassafras tea was sold, hence the adjective Salopian above.
Hogarth: (1697-1764) a painter and engraver, best known for his series of pictures *The Rake's Progress* and *Marriage à la Mode*. Another series was that of the *Idle and Industrious Apprentice*.
A sable cloud, etc: from Milton's *Comus*.
Rachels: see St. Matthew ii. 18, quoted from Jeremiah xxxi. 15.
Montagu: this may refer to Edward Wortley Montagu (1713-76) who ran away as a cabin boy and was eventually discovered by the British Consul in Cadiz and restored to his family.
Arundel Castle: in Sussex, the seat of the Duke of Norfolk.
Ascanius: the son of Aeneas and therefore the legendary grandson of Venus.
incunabula: early printed books, probably suggested by the reference to sheets.
Golden lads and lasses must, etc.: the song in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*.

MACKERY END, IN HERTFORDSHIRE

As a contrast, we turn now to one of Lamb's best-loved essays, in which his genius for homely themes and his lovable personality is evident. "Antique modes and phrases" there are, but moderated as if in deference to Bridget's dislike of what is "odd or bizarre." The man Charles Lamb is revealed as he is in all those essays which have endeared themselves to readers of all tastes, *The South-Sea*

House, The Superannuated Man, Grace Before Meat, and *Old China,* not to mention *Mrs. Battle's Opinions upon Whist.*

Burton: (1577-1640 New Style) author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* just the kind of book Lamb would use as the source of his old-fashioned phraseology. See the reference to it in the next essay.

Religio Medici: i.e. the religion of a doctor, written by Sir Thomas Brown (1605-82) who practised at Norwich.

Margaret Newcastle: (?1624-74) wrote plays and verses and a biography of her husband, the Duke of Newcastle. Pepys called her " mad, conceited and ridiculous ": Charles Lamb thought otherwise. If it were not for these two writers, she would not be remembered.

the noble park at Luton: the seat of the Marquis of Bute. The house Lamb knew was burnt down in 1843.

But thou, that didst appear so fair, etc.: part of a stanza from Wordsworth's *Yarrow Visited.*

DETACHED THOUGHTS ON BOOKS AND READING

The two previous essays were drawn from *The Essays of Elia,* the following one comes from *The Last Essays of Elia,* published ten years after the *Essays.* It gives us an insight, not into the character so much as into the intellectual tastes of Lamb and the sort of reading that formed his style.

The Relapse: by Sir John Vanbrugh (1666-1726) the architect of Blenheim Palace, who wrote a few comedies.

Shaftesbury: probably the third earl (1671-1713) whose chief work was entitled *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times.*

Jonathan Wild: (?1682-1725) became head of a corporation of thieves. He opened an office in London for the recovery and restoration of stolen property. Defoe told the story of his life. He was ultimately hanged.

Hume, etc.: Hume the historian, Gibbon author of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* Robertson of the *History of Scotland;* Beattie and Soame Jenyns both wrote on *Moral Science.* Josephus wrote a famous *History of the Jews* and Paley's *Moral Philosophy* was until comparatively recently standard reading in the older universities. *Biblia a-biblia* means books that are no books.

Farquhar: (1678-1707) a writer of comedies.

Adam Smith: (1723-90) author of the celebrated *Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.*

Paracelsus: (1493-1541) a dealer in magic and spells. He effected many cures in Germany and was appointed Professor of Physic at Basle. He is regarded as the initiator of modern Chemistry. See Browning's poem "Paracelsus."

Lully: (1235-1315) born in Majorca, and became a Franciscan friar. He was a missionary, philosopher and poet.

Tom Jones: Fielding's novel, published in 1749.

Vicar of Wakefield: published 1766 by Goldsmith.

We know not where is that Promethean torch, etc.: more or less Shakespeare's *Othello*, Act V, scene 2, in which the word used is "heat" not "torch."

Sir Philip Sidney: (1554-86) author of *Arcadia.*

Bishop Taylor: (1613-67) better known as Jeremy Taylor, author of *Holy Living and Holy Dying.*

Fuller: Thomas Fuller (1608-61) is best known for his book *The Worthies of England*. He was chaplain to King Charles II.

Beaumont and Fletcher: dramatists who collaborated between 1606 and 1616. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle, Philaster and the Maid's Tragedy* are perhaps their best plays. Fletcher is supposed to have contributed to Shakepeare's *Henry VIII.*

Malone: (1741-1812) editor of Shakespeare. His edition was published nine years after his death by his friend Boswell.

Kit Marlowe: (1564-93) a great dramatist. His one lasting poem is: "Come live with me and be my love" (The Passionate Shepherd to his Love).

Drayton: (1563-1631) a considerable poet, whose *Agincourt* is one of our most famous ballads.

Drummond of Hawthornden: (1585-1649) is represented in the *Oxford Book of English Verse* by nine poems.

Bishop Andrewes' sermons: Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626) was successively Bishop of Chichester, Ely, and Winchester. Famous for his learning, he was the first on the list of forty-seven divines appointed to make the authorized version of the Bible. A modern poet, T. S. Eliot, has published (1928) a poem, For Lancelot Andrewes.

Candide: by Voltaire, the French w ..er. It is the most famous of all his works, and though outwardly a story, enshrines his deepest reflections on life. The poin' of Lamb's remark is that Voltaire was confessedly an atheist.

Primrose Hill: a slight elevation in N.W. London—in South Hampstead.

Pamela: a famous story by Samuel Richardson (1689-1761).

Cythera: an island sacred to Venus.

Lardner: Nathaniel Lardner (1684-1768), a lifelong student of theology, on which he wrote several books which had quite a considerable vogue for a century.

Clarissa: another of Richardson's romantic heroines: *Clarissa Harlowe* was published in 1747 and, like *Pamela*, was popular in both France and Holland.

Mary Lamb: wrote some verse. *The Oxford Book* preserves "A Child's a Plaything for an Hour."

AN OLD SCOTCH GARDENER

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S essays are essentially personal, and, because he is prepared frankly to voice his opinions, they possess the clarity of style that is inseparable from clear thinking. In one of his essays, *On Some Technical Elements of Style*, he himself defines the essentials of good style as being, in his view, first that the phrases should be rhythmical and pleasing to the ear; secondly, that the phrases should be musical in the mouth; thirdly, that the writer should weave the argument into a pattern, both beautiful and logical; and lastly, that he should master the art of choosing apt, explicit, and communicative words. This ideal he consciously strove to fulfil. Sir A. Quiller-Couch (*Studies in Literature*) says that he was "a melodious writer" and Chesterton (*The Victorian Age in Literature*) comments on "the French finish and fastidiousness of his style; in which he seemed to pick the right word up on the point of his pen, like a man playing spillikins." Two very sound critics. The essay which follows is drawn from *Memories and Portraits*, in which Stevenson recalled the memories of his youth, and may well be compared with the work of Earle and Addison's portrait of *Will Wimble*.

Andrew Fairservice: the gardener in Scott's *Rob Roy*.

Walker's Lives: the lives written by Patrick Walker and published together as *Six Saints of the Covenant*. Walker, who died in 1745, was a leader of the Presbyterian church in Scotland.

Hind Let Loose: see Macaulay's *History of England* (Chapter 24) "Alexander Shields, whose Hind Let Loose proves that in his zeal for the Covenant he had forgotten the Gospel." Shields was a Covenanter minister, who went on the ill-fated expedition to Darien and died in Jamaica.

Dionysius: the Younger, Tyrant of Syracuse, who was expelled from the town in 356 B.C. He retired to Locri, where he gathered

supporters and recovered the town, only to be expelled again and finally two years later.

Slights that patient merit, etc.: in *Hamlet*, Act III, scene 1, where the first word is "spurns," not "slights."

braes: hill-sides.

pre-Raphaelites: a school of painters, established under the influence of Ruskin by Rossetti, Millais, and others in the mid-Victorian period. They claimed to revert to the ideals of the Italian painters who preceded the Renaissance.

Jean Jacques: Rousseau (1712-78) who wrote *The Social Contract*, and through it exerted a great influence on the French Revolution. He was one of the greatest of French eighteenth-century writers.

prelect: verb meaning "lecture."

Burns: the great Scotch poet (1759-96) who wrote among other things "Auld Lang Syne."

draff: dregs or refuse.

Annihilating all that's made, etc.: from *The Garden* by Andrew Marvell (1621-78 New Style).

the haughty Babylonian: see Isaiah xiv. 4-12.

THE IDEAL HOUSE

GRAHAM BALFOUR, in his *Life of Stevenson*, describing his home in Samoa, which he named Vailima, says of it that "it fulfilled many of the requirements both of structure and more especially of position which he had laid down for his ideal house"; we have therefore in this essay an entirely personal essay expressive of the author's tastes, and one which might well be compared with Lamb's *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading*, for both partake of the character of "dispersed meditations." The essay was probably written about 1884.

goil: a dialect word meaning "ravine."

Shallow rivers by whose falls, etc.: from Marlowe's poem, "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love."

Chimborazo: the highest peak of the equatorial Andes.

Bec-d'Argent: silverbill, a bird of the genus "Munia."

maestrini: singers, equals "little maestros."

ad hoc: for that purpose and no other.

Canaletto: two Venetian artists, who painted scenes of Venice in the early eighteenth century, are known by this name. Their work, since they were uncle and nephew, is so much alike as to make it difficult to distinguish between them.

Corot: a nineteenth-century French artist, celebrated for his landscapes.

Claude: another French landscape painter, born in 1600.

De Musset: a poet of light verse, belonging to the French Romantic School.

Monte Cristo: by Dumas, the author of *The Three Musketeers* and *The Vicomte de Bragelonne.*

the Paston Letters: letters of the Norfolk family of Paston, surviving from the time of the Wars of the Roses.

Burt: Edward Burt, died 1755. The full title of his book is *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland.*

the Newgate Calendar: otherwise called the Malefactors' Bloody Register. It was published in 1774 and dealt with notorious crimes between 1700 and its date.

THE ART OF THE ESSAYIST

A. C. BENSON was the eldest son of the Archbishop of Canterbury and became himself President of Magdalene College, Cambridge. He issued a number of volumes of scholarly essays under various titles, such as *From a College Window* and *The House of Quiet.* This particular essay is included here, because it is a study, by an essayist who was also a scholar, of the fundamentals of essay-writing and so especially germane to the purpose of this volume. Cardinal Newman once said: "Style is the shadow of a personality," and it is from that angle that Benson regards the essay; he is not thinking of either the didactic nor the periodical essay, though his own essay does rather suggest the didactic tendencies of the teaching profession.

De Quincey: (1785-1859) the "impassioned autobiography" is the famous *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.* De Quincey was a constant contributor to the *London Magazine* and *Blackwood's.* He was a contemporary of Lamb and Hazlitt.

Pater: (1839-94) Walter Pater, one of the most admired writers on art criticism in the late nineteenth century. His masterpiece is his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance.* Dr. Saintsbury was of the opinion that "no one has ever surpassed Mr. Pater in deliberate and successful architecture of the prose-paragraph."

Argon: an inert element discovered by Sir William Ramsay, Professor of Chemistry at University College, London, in 1894.

Plato's Republic: the acknowledged masterpiece of the Greek philosopher Plato (427-347 B.C.).

THE SAMPHIRE GATHERER

This essay is drawn from a collection of essays which Hudson issued under the title of *Traveller in Little Things.* Few of our modern essayists better answer to Benson's description of the essayist as "a spectator of life": but, in his case, not of human life only, but of all life, birds and insects in particular. Edward Garnett speaks of his "unfailing well-spring of feeling" which this essay, and, in fact, nearly all his written work, is calculated to exhibit. It illustrates another feature of his work, his response to lonely and deserted spots which he loved to people with some solitary figure, like Wordsworth's "leech-gatherer on the lonely moor." In this same volume of essays we have the stunted little boy in that entitled *A Surrey Village*, and the woman with the sunburnt face among the gravestones in *Her Own Village*. There is something Wordsworthian too in the poetic simplicity of his language and in the way nature inspires his thoughts. Hudson was born in the Pampas of the Argentine in 1841 and died in 1922, *Traveller in Little Things* being published the year before his death. His health broke when he was sixteen and he was driven to a contemplative existence. He came to London in 1869 and "sick, poor and friendless" he faced the hardships of existence until the publication of *The Naturalist in La Plata* ensured his recognition and opened what Edward Garnett, who knew him intimately, calls his "most creative period" (1892-1922).

Samphire: a fleshy herb, growing on the sea-shore and on cliffs, used in making pickles. There is a line in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, descriptive of "one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade" hanging "halfway down" the dizzy cliffs of Dover.

THIRD THOUGHTS

E. V. Lucas (1868-1938) began his literary career in the nineties amid the break-up of the Victorian ideal. In 1903 he undertook an elaborate edition of the works of Charles and Mary Lamb, and this intimate acquaintance with Lamb's works colours his own later essays, which bear considerable likeness to those of the earlier essayist. He is the Elia of his day. Like Hudson he was observant, like Lamb he was friendly and humorous. The charm of his writings is generally admitted. Though he started in journalism, he is

not essentially a journalist, but a miscellaneous writer producing anthologies, essays, guide books, novels and children's books to meet the needs of a generation which was growing rapidly more literate. This essay is drawn from *The Phantom Journal* (and other essays and diversions) to give it its full title, published in 1919.

Turner: (1775-1851) a great landscape painter: his most famous picture is possibly The Fighting Téméraire. He first exhibited at the Royal Academy when he was fifteen.
Quixotry: the form of chivalrous unselfishness for which Cervantes' *Don Quixote* was conspicuous.
magnatism: literally, becoming a magnate.

ON THE PLEASURES OF NO LONGER BEING VERY YOUNG

Though *All Is Grist*, from which this essay is drawn, was not published till 1931, it is convenient to take it here because Chesterton, like Lucas and Belloc, is a link between the traditions of the Victorian age and the inter-war generation. All three wrote cheerfully and happily in contrast to the sense of disillusion which animated many of the younger writers after the war of 1914-18. Chesterton was by instinct and training a journalist, and a very good journalist at that. He wrote to amuse: or, as the *Cambridge History of English Literature* puts it, he "sought the effect of a moment." His work is characterized by a genial wit, rather of an artificial kind. He rejoices in sentences like "We had read of it in the words of Shakespeare, which possibly were not written by Shakespeare: we had learned them and learned nothing from them." He likes to give his reader something of a shock. He is, in his later work particularly, a pleasant moralist. G. K. Chesterton was born in 1874 and died in 1936. His best work is in criticism—*The Victorian Age in Literature*, in fantastic fiction such as the *Napoleon of Notting Hill* or the *Father Brown Stories*, and one poem, the "Ballad of the White Horse."

Nestor: the eldest and wisest of the Greek chieftains at the siege of Troy.
a year or two ago: a reference to the slump of 1931.
Eldorado: a Spanish word implying a fictitious region rich in gold.
the words of Shakespeare: in *Henry VIII*, Act III, scene 2, beginning: "Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition." It is

thought that someone else, possibly Fletcher, wrote a good deal of the play.

Marengo: Napoleon's victory in North Italy in 1800.

Charles V: Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire from 1519 to 1556, when he resigned the crown in favour of his brother. He was the father of Philip II of Spain.

Sir Oliver Lodge: a famous British scientist, born in 1851. He was one of the pioneers of wireless telegraphy and of atomic study. After the death of his son Raymond he became a leading advocate of the reality of the spiritual world and published a number of books on spiritualism.

ON THE "BUCOLICS" OF VIRGIL, A CAFÉ IN PARIS, THE LENGTH OF ESSAYS, PHŒBUS, BACCHUS, A WANTON MAID, AND OTHER MATTERS

This amusing essay, illustrative of the way in which an essayist may allow himself to wander from topic to topic as they suggest themselves, comes from a volume entitled *On*, which Belloc published in 1923. Though most of the essays in this volume, like those in the similar volumes *On Nothing, On Anything, On Something*, are drawn from periodicals, Belloc is not, like his friend Chesterton, instinctively a journalist, but is at heart a scholar of considerable attainments in history. H. V. Routh (*English Literature and Ideas in the Twentieth Century*) has summed up the achievement of these two men: "they became a centre and an example for those who loved England but hated what England was trying to become, and still believed that most evil things could be proved to be silly." Belloc, who was born in 1870, has, in addition to his essays, published historical monographs on Danton and Wolsey, novels (*Emmanuel Burden* and *A Change in the Cabinet*) and a few charming poems.

Bucolics: a series of ten pastoral poems, called *Eclogues*, written by the Roman poet Virgil, and containing many happy descriptions of the Italian countryside. Generally speaking, pastoral poetry has thrived in days of war and expressed man's longing for an idyllic existence.

Locke: the author of the *Essay on the Human Understanding*.

Bourse: the stock exchange.

Corneille: (1606-84) a great French dramatist.

Incipe, parve puer, etc.: a line from the fourth eclogue meaning: " Begin, small boy, to know your mother with a smile."

Et me Phœbus amat, etc.: lines from the third eclogue, meaning: "Phœbus has always his own gifts to me, laurels and the sweetly blushing hyacinth." The speaker means that the laurel and the hyacinth are Apollo's gifts to man and so are rightly offered to him in sacrifice.

noblest and most learned of the Oxford Colleges: presumably Balliol College, Belloc's own college, is intended.

Malo me Galatea petit, etc.: these lines follow on those just quoted. They mean: " Galatea (his shepherdess sweetheart) pelts me with an apple, the roguish girl, and runs away to the willows and desires to be seen first." All fruits with pips were sacred to Venus.

THE CHOCOLATE BUS

A SOMEWHAT younger contemporary of these essayists, and himself a very popular writer of light essays, is Robert Lynd, who was born in 1879. The titles of his books of essays—*Life's Little Oddities, Things One Hears*, etc.—mark him as the modern representative of the " spectator of life " of Browning's Contemporary, referred to in Benson's essay. Lynd was born in Belfast and educated at the Royal Academical Institution and at Queen's College, Belfast. He became a professional journalist, writing for the *New Statesman*, before becoming Literary Editor of the *News Chronicle*. Like Lamb and Lucas, he writes only to amuse. The two essays that follow are drawn from a volume entitled *Solomon In All His Glory*, published in 1922.

red, orange, etc: the colours enumerated are those of the spectrum: it is equivalent to saying: " the colours of the rainbow."

Dante: (1265-1321) the great Italian author of the *Divine Comedy*, one of the world's great epics. It is divided into the Inferno, the Purgatorio and the Paradiso.

Miss Ethel Dell: a popular writer of romances of which perhaps the *Way of an Eagle* attracted most attention. The wrapper would be rather thrilling.

filled all Italy: the Italian Renaissance.

THE STUDENT

Euripides: one of three Greek dramatists mentioned in this essay.

Euripides and Æschylus are tragic dramatists, the former being born about 480 B.C., the latter being then at his prime. Aristophanes is the greatest of the Greek comic dramatists.

Morris's Philology: the Dr. Richard Morris who collaborated with Skeat in the well-known *Specimens of Early English.*

Maine's Ancient Law: a classic, published in 1861. Sir Henry Maine, who was born in 1822 and died in 1888, also published in 1885 a standard work on *Popular Government.*

Rasselas: a novel written by Dr. Johnson in a week in order to pay the expenses of his mother's funeral (1759).

Mommsen: a historian, who was born in Schleswig and died in 1903, and whose *Roman History*, published between 1854 and 1856, is one of the great books of history.

Cruttwell: probably C. R. M. F. Cruttwell, principal of Hertford College, who wrote a number of text-books on English and European History, is indicated.

Tacitus: the greatest of Roman Historians: the exact dates of his birth (probably about A.D. 61) and his death are unknown.

Schubert: (1797-1828) a Viennese musician and song-writer.

Adelaïde: a song by Beethoven, composed about 1795.

Meistersingers: a music-drama by Wagner, produced at Munich 1868.

Schumann: (1810-1856) another German song-writer, born in Saxony.

Grove's Dictionary: of music, published 1878-89.

Dr. William Smith: who was born in 1814, won reputation for his Latin dictionary and his dictionary of Greek and Roman antiquities. He concentrated on books for students such as the abbreviated edition of *Hume's History of England*, which was known as *The Student's Hume.* Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is one of the world's great books of history. Such a student as Lynd is describing would, he says, prefer a potted version to the full and magnificent text.

Professor John Adams: Sir John Adams, Professor of Education at the University of London from 1902 to 1922, published *The Student's Guide* in 1917.

Epicurean: Epicurus taught that the attainment of pleasure was the highest good in life, and the word Epicurean has come to mean those who sought the luxuries of life, though to Epicurus himself the possession of liberty was the supreme pleasure.

Thoreau: (1817-62) an American who wrote *Walden or Life in the Woods* in 1854.

Emerson: a friend of Thoreau's, who published a volume of Essays in 1841. He was a distinguished writer and lecturer. Other books of his are *Representative Men* (1850) and *English Traits*

(1856). Most people would put Emerson above Thoreau as a writer, though both are men of standing.

Plautus: (c. 254-184 B.C.) a Roman comic dramatist, whose plays served as suggestions to both Shakespeare and Molière.

PLEASURES

ALDOUS HUXLEY is a younger man than Lynd or Belloc and belongs definitely to the inter-war generation, typifying much of its disillusionment and distress of mind. In another essay in *On the Margin*, from which this essay is drawn, he speaks of it as "a state of mind which fate has forced on us." "The subject of any European Government to-day," he says, "feels all the sensations of Gulliver in the paws of the Queen of Brobdingnag's monkey—the sensations of some small and helpless being at the mercy of something monstrous and irresponsible and idiotic." That being his frame of mind, he does not tilt at evils as Lynd does, but attacks them uncompromisingly and fiercely. There is something in his approach akin to Swift. He found, however, that the novel, rather than the essay, was the vehicle most suited to his vein, and it is as a novelist that he became a leader of the younger generation of writers. He is the grandson of the great scientist, Thomas Huxley, and he views the pettiness of mankind as it were through a microscope, and with scientific detachment. *Pleasures* is a good example of his forcible, vigorous pen.

Lord Northcliffe: died 1922, owner of the *Daily Mail.*

Mr. Bryan: (1860-1925) Secretary of State to President Wilson and opposed American entry into the war of 1914.

Comstockery: from Anthony Comstock, an American moral reformer (1844-1915).

Neanderthal: put for primitive man from the skeleton found there. It was in a cave in the valley of the Dussel, a tributary of the Rhine.

Athens: the heart of Greek culture in the ancient world. Huxley implies that the civilization of 1914 stood between primitive barbarism and the civilization of ancient Greece.

Dr. Donne: (1573-1631) was Dean of St. Paul's and a poet of distinction.

Lord Keeper Williams: John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln (1621-41), and Archbishop of York (1641-50) was the last clerical Chancellor of England.

Ku Klux Klan: a secret society, formed after the Civil War, in order to keep alive hostility to negroes and revived after the war of 1914, to combat foreign influence.

IN CRIMSON SILK

THE world knows Mr. Priestley as the "sturdy philosopher" of the shabby clothes he calls himself in this essay, which was one of his earlier efforts, or as the left-wing social reformer of *The Good Companions* and *Angel Pavement* and of innumerable broadcast talks. I like the essay because it shows him to be capable of being "airy, exquisite, now slightly wistful, now mocking, epigrammatizing the world away," to use his own words in this essay. J. B. Priestley is the son of a Yorkshire schoolmaster and, unlike Huxley, who gave his message to the inter-war world through fiction, Priestley's most effective vehicle has been the drama. No essay in this book provides a better illustration of the art of making an essay out of the most everyday material.

the gorgeous East in fee: a quotation from Wordsworth's sonnet "On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic."

King Cambyses's vein: i.e. with passion. The phrase is used by Falstaff in Act II, scene 4 of Shakespeare's *King Henry IV*, part 1. The reference is to one of the earliest plays of the Elizabethan drama on the story of King Cambyses, who was a successor of Cyrus on the throne of ancient Persia. The play was written by Thomas Preston.

Borgias: see note on Goldsmith's *Instability of World Grandeur*. Priestley's adjectives well describe the Borgias, "strong, ruthless, beautiful."

zanies: buffoons, a Shakespearian word, see *Twelfth Night*, Act I, scene 5.

Puck: from *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the fairy who plays mischievous tricks with the lovers.

INVITATION TO THE WAR

SIR A. P HERBERT is a born crusader, and one of the crusades on which he has embarked is one for the accurate use of words. This essay is the preface to a volume entitled *What a Word!*, the greater part of which is quoted from his contributions on the misuse of

words to the famous English humorous weekly, *Punch*. It is interesting to compare Herbert's essay with that of Swift on a similar subject given earlier in this book: and to note how the modern writer takes his reader into partnership with him in a hail-fellow-well-met tone which is alien to the didacticism of the earlier essayist. Alan Patrick Herbert was born in 1890 and educated at Winchester College and Oxford University, for which he is now one of its Members of Parliament. He joined the staff of *Punch* in 1924.

rickshaw: =jinricksha, a light, two-wheeled, hooded vehicle pulled by a man, used in the Far East generally.

H. W. Fowler: compiler of the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary*, and author of a number of standard works on English usage, of which the one mentioned and *The King's English* are the best known.

M.C.C.: the governing body of the game of cricket: "body-line" refers to the debate in cricketing circles aroused by the bowling of Larwood, which was directed on to the body of the batsman.

Appendix I: to the book. The questions were:

1. Are you intelligible?
2. Are you pleasing?
3. Are you legitimate?
4. Are you needed?

which he then puts into verse as:

"Understood?
Can we admire you?
Are you good?
Do we require you?"

Black lists: lists of words which are objectionable.

ELIA AFTER A HUNDRED YEARS

Desmond MacCarthy is a Doctor of Laws of Aberdeen University, and his reputation as a literary critic stands very high indeed in informed circles to-day. It must not be forgotten that the essay has been put to many varied uses, and among these one of those useful to readers is its use for assessing the virtues and pointing out the weaknesses of books and authors, a process which we call

literary criticism. It seemed desirable in any selection of essays to include one essay of this type, and no more suitable essayist than Dr. MacCarthy could be chosen. He does, in the columns of the *Sunday Times*, write a weekly review of new books, but as the works themselves would be unknown to the generality of those who use this selection, it seemed on consideration better to select one on Lamb which appeared in the *Listener* for January 1935.

the tragedy which shadowed his life: the occasional madness of his sister and lifelong companion, Mary.

Froude: James Anthony Froude (1818-94), a friend of Carlyle's and a historian of high standing. His volume of essays, *Short Studies*, and a later work entitled *English Seamen* are the most popular of his books.

Carlyle: (1795-1881) one of the outstanding figures of English literature in the nineteenth century, Thomas Carlyle survives as the author of the *History of the French Revolution*, *Sartor Resartus*, and *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*.

Swinburne: the poet (1837-1909). He was an enthusiastic lover of Lamb, and is reported to have once said that Lamb's *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets* taught him " more than any other book in the world—that and the Bible."

Pater: see note to A. C. Benson's *The Art of the Essayist*.

Lavinian shores: Lavinia was the daughter of the King of Latium in Virgil's *Æneid*: hence the reference is to the household gods of Aeneas, fleeing from Troy and seeking a new home in Italy.

Professor Elton: Professor of English Literature at the University of Liverpool (1900-25). He was born in 1861, and died 1945.

Santayana: George Santayana, born at Madrid 1863, became Professor of Philosophy at Harvard. Among his many philosophical writings is one entitled *The Realm of Essence*, published in 1928: it was followed by *The Realm of Matter* in 1930.

THE POET AND THE FILM

HERBERT READ was born in 1893 and is now a director of George Routledge and Sons, the publishers. After a spell as Assistant-keeper at the Victoria and Albert Museum, he became Professor of Fine Art at Edinburgh University, and his interest in the arts is evident in his essays. *A Coat of Many Colours*, from which this essay is drawn, was published in 1945 and contains " more than

seventy essays, covering every aspect of his critical activity"—to quote the publishers' notice of it—during the previous fifteen years. Dr. Read writes with sincerity and polish of style as befits a writer who has himself made in his book on *English Prose Style* (1928, George Bell and Sons) perhaps the most informative study of style produced in our time. Quite apart from its subject, it is arguable that this essay could not have been written in any age but our own, or by any man but an art critic, for Dr. Read knows the dream-like fantasies of the surrealists and the advances of modern psychology. He has none of the depression of the inter-war essayists, but rather the idealist aspirations which have succeeded to the pessimism of the twenties. It must be admitted, however, that the essay is rather difficult, and not easy reading.

medieval scholasticism: the "schoolmen" of the Middle Ages enlisted the philosophy of Aristotle in the service of Catholic theology. St. Thomas Aquinas was the founder and greatest exponent of scholastic philosophy.

Coleridge: (1772-1834) the poet and friend of Wordsworth, produced a great work of literary criticism entitled *Biographia Literaria.*

Descartes: (1596-1650) a French philosopher, better known to most of us as the inventor of Cartesian co-ordinates in mathematics.

rise of romanticism: in this country generally dated from the publication of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798).

Salvador Dali: better known as a surrealist painter. He has written his autobiography and recently published a war novel, *Hidden Faces.*

surrealiste: a conception of art, proclaiming the superiority of the dream world over reality, first propounded in 1924.

Jean Cocteau: born in Paris in 1891. He is a French playwright who has also written ballets, poems, essays, and novels.

Georges Auric: born 1899, has written incidental music to plays of Aristophanes, Molière, Ben Jonson, etc.

Marx brothers: four brothers, actors, of an American family, Arthur, born 1893, Julius, born 1895, Leonard, born 1891, and Herbert, born 1901. They always act together, and *Animal Crackers* is one of their pieces.

James Joyce: born in Dublin 1882, and known by his novel *Ulysses.* In another essay in this book, Dr. Read refers to him as a "romantic poet of the most extreme kind." He died in 1941.

Henry Miller: an American author whose latest work (in prose) is an impression of America after ten years' absence in Europe, which he entitled *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare.*

BANKING WITHOUT BLARNEY

This essay is drawn from a volume entitled *Not Too Serious*, published in 1946. Lynn Doyle was born in County Down, 1873, and at the age of sixteen entered the Northern Banking Company, Belfast, where he remained for seventeen years before being appointed to the managership of a number of branches of the Bank. We have seen that the essayist must be a spectator of life, and on no aspect can he be better informed than about his own life's work. Not that Lynn Doyle was ever a banker and nothing more, for he published a volume of Irish short stories only two years after leaving Belfast. This essay has some kinship with two of the essays of Charles Lamb, that on *The South-Sea House*, in which he held a clerkship for thirty-three years, and *The Superannuated Man*, written after his retirement, and it has somewhat of Lamb's cheerfulness and geniality. The reader of this book may have noticed and, perhaps, felt rather daunted by the display of general knowledge possessed by the writers of most of them: here, however, is an essay that contains no recondite quotations from English or Classical poets, no allusions to Greek or Roman history; it is simple and clear, lightly amusing, eminently personal, and even autobiographical: an example, in fact, of how to make a readable essay out of one's own everyday experience.

Sphinx: originally a fabulous monster who propounded riddles and destroyed those who failed to guess the answer. The name is now applied to the statue that stands before the Pyramids of Gizeh: it is compounded of the head of a king attached to the body of a lion. It is proverbial for keeping its secrets.

THE BEETLE THAT WENT ON ITS TRAVELS

This essay comes from *The Times* of June 19th, 1947. Enough has already been said in the introduction about the fourth leader of *The Times*, and it will be sufficient here to call attention to the likeness between this and, say, *In Crimson Silk*. Both deal lightheartedly with their topic and intersperse their jesting with moral reflections. The writer, whoever he may be, is in the tradition of Lamb.

Delendus est: a parody of Cato's "Delenda est Carthago"—Carthage must be destroyed—with which he is said to have commenced every speech, on whatever topic, that he made in the Roman Senate until his object was achieved and Carthage was dust and ashes.

Dr. Crippen: the murderer whose arrest was the first to be effected by the use of wireless.

Dr. Crippen, I presume: parodied from Stanley's remark on finding Dr. Livingstone in Africa.

Andersen: Hans Christian Andersen, born 1805, the Danish writer of fairy-tales.

It's a long, long way to Colorado: another parody, this time of the song so popular during the 1914-18 war, "Tipperary."

"RECESSIONAL" IN RETROSPECT

The "Recessional" is the well-known hymn of Kipling's beginning:

> God of our fathers, known of old,
> Lord of our far-flung battle-line

and ending each verse except the last with the refrain:

> Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet
> Lest we forget, lest we forget.

It was written on the 22nd of June, 1897, and published in *The Times* on July 17th, 1897. This essay appeared as the Fourth Leader on July 17th, 1947, exactly fifty years after its first publication. It is an example of *The Times* in serious mood, and responding to the aspirations of the nation in lofty vein befitting the subject. The year 1897 was the Diamond Jubilee year, the sixtieth year of the reign of Queen Victoria.

jingoism: bellicose nationalism, from the song popular in 1878:

> We don't want to fight
> But, by Jingo, if we do.

Seeley: Sir J. R. Seeley, whose *Expansion of England*, published in 1885, became one of the text-books of British Imperialism. Like Kipling's poem, the book stimulates reflection on the magnitude of our responsibilities rather than exaltation of imperial power.

Chamberlain: Joseph, Secretary of State for the Colonies 1895-1903, that is, throughout the Boer War.

NOTES

Dilke: Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke (1843-1911) preached the doctrine of Radical Imperialism in a book entitled *Greater Britain.*

Milner: (1854-1925) afterwards Lord Milner, was High Commissioner of South Africa before, during, and after the Boer War.

Macaulay: the reference is to a passage in Chapter 23 of *The History of England*, in which the author, discussing England's attitude to Ireland in the reign of William III, launches out into a consideration of how a state should regard its colonies.